

# IN THE TRENCHES: RESCUE ARCHAEOLOGY AT THE BALA HISSAR, KABUL

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## *Abstract*

The Bala Hissar was the royal, military and administrative heart of Kabul for a significant period before it was occupied by British forces during the first two Anglo-Afghan wars in the nineteenth century. Despite its archaeological and historical significance, part of the site continues to function as a military base, an expansion of which began in 2007 when nine large holes were bulldozed into the site before protests halted the work. This paper details the findings of an archaeological impact assessment undertaken in July 2007, and incorporates an analysis of satellite images documenting further construction in 2009. The results provide the first explicit archaeological (in particular ceramic) evidence suggesting deep continuity of occupation at the site. The contested ownership and uncertain future of the Bala Hissar in Kabul exemplify the pressures placed on archaeological sites around the world, in the face of uncontrolled development and competing agendas.

## *Keywords*

Bala Hissar; Kabul; Afghanistan; historic fort; ceramics

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Bala Hissar, or High Fort, is the historic heart of Kabul, situated at the town's south-eastern edge on a natural rock outcrop rising some 50 m above the surrounding plain (Fig. 1). The site comprises upper and lower fortified enclosures and is registered in its entirety as a national historic monument. The Upper Bala Hissar is located on the south side of the fortress, while the lower enclosure is more extensive, covering in the region of 42 ha and containing most of the historically attested buildings as well as, until the late nineteenth century, a substantial population. The surviving stone and packed-earth fortifications on the site are primarily mid-eighteenth to late nineteenth century in date, but a few fragments of Mughal-era architecture survive.<sup>1</sup>

Consensus has it that the Bala Hissar was occupied long before the intensive activity initiated by Mughal rulers. The site was clearly in use prior to the sixteenth century: the first Mughal emperor Babur had to besiege the fort to gain entrance in 1504, and the

Bala Hissar was considerably built up by him and his descendants.<sup>2</sup> No explicit archaeological evidence of activity pre-dating the Mughals in the Bala Hissar has, however, been identified to date. Traces of fortifications in the south-west of the site have been attributed (without supporting evidence) to the Hephthalite period (AD 450–565).<sup>3</sup> Pre-Kushan pottery has been identified in Kabul city near the fort, as have Greek and Achaemenid coins, while the surrounding valley contains remnants of the city's Buddhist, Hindu and pre-modern Islamic past, and a historic cemetery, the Shuhada-i Salahin (Pious Martyrs).<sup>4</sup> The uninvestigated archaeological remains on the Bala Hissar, therefore, have the potential to yield a wide variety of data about the changing occupation of the site over at least one and a half millennia. Despite the significance of the site, its history has only recently been studied in detail (readers are referred to the excellent synthesis of

<sup>1</sup> Lee 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Woodburn 2009: 3.

<sup>3</sup> Caspani 1946; Ball 1982, I: 136–37; Dupree L. 1980: 302; Woodburn 2009: 3; Schinasi 2008: 42; Dupree N.H. 1972: 71–72.

<sup>4</sup> Dupree N.H. 1977: 82–83; Ball 1982, I: 136–37; Omrani and Leeming 2005: 571.



Fig. 1. Locations of the Bala Hissar's major features, indicated on the 1879 Ordnance Survey map, "Plan and Survey of the Bala Hissar or Fort of Cabul shewing the present state and nature of its defences and pointing out repairs and improvements recommended for its better security". Photozincographed at the Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton, 1879; from a lithographic copy taken in the Surveyor General's Office, Calcutta, December 1878; copied from a plan signed by Lieutenant J.L.D. Sturt, Engineer in HM Shah Shooja's Service, 13 December 1839. (Courtesy of the National Archives, Kew, reference MPH 1/675. Some of the indicated locations [e.g. 14, 16] are approximate.)

the post-mediaeval historical sources by Woodburn) while—as noted above—archaeological investigations have been negligible.<sup>5</sup>

Despite legislative protection, a major expansion of the current military facilities at the Bala Hissar began in May 2007, funded at least initially by the US government. This work, which resulted in the digging of nine large trenches, was undertaken without archaeological supervision, in contravention of a 2004 law protecting Afghan cultural heritage.<sup>6</sup> A broad spectrum of local and international protests followed, and the

Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC) and other cultural organisations successfully lobbied for the work to be halted. In July 2007, at the invitation of the Deputy Minister for Culture, Mr Omar Sultan, the authors visited the Lower Bala Hissar to undertake an assessment of the damage caused by the construction work, in collaboration with colleagues from the National Afghan Institute of Archaeology (NAIA).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Woodburn 2009; Omrani and Leeming 2005: 571.

<sup>6</sup> AKTC 2007b: 2. A translation of the law is available at [www.cemml.colostate.edu/cultural/09476/pdf/afghan-antiquities-law-2004.pdf](http://www.cemml.colostate.edu/cultural/09476/pdf/afghan-antiquities-law-2004.pdf) (accessed 11 Sept. 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Since our visit, further archaeological work, in the form of limited excavations, has been undertaken at the Bala Hissar by the Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan in March 2008 (DAFA 2008). This work focused both on the edge of the higher ground of the Lower Bala Hissar north of trench 2, and in an area outside the walls in the lower town further north still. This work will no doubt provide more valuable archaeological information on this

Analysis of satellite images available through Google Earth™ has since revealed that further construction work was undertaken in mid-2009, resulting in the creation of a large walled compound in the centre of the Lower Bala Hissar, some activity in its north-west corner and development on the Upper Bala Hissar, which was inaccessible to the authors and has never been investigated archaeologically.

In this paper, we attempt to correlate the areas impacted by these recent construction programmes with the historically documented structures of the Bala Hissar, and to present and analyse the archaeological (primarily ceramic) evidence for both recent and earlier periods of activity on the site that was salvaged from the trenches during our 2007 visit. Although our fieldwork was necessarily brief due to difficulties of access, the results are of particular importance in light of the current lack of available archaeological data relating to the Bala Hissar in Kabul, and to post-Timurid remains more widely. The broader issue of the continued use of a historic fortress as a military base has ramifications for other archaeological sites in Afghanistan, such as those at Qunduz, Bagram and Herat, as well as further afield. The paper also highlights the role of satellite imagery in monitoring impacts upon contested historical sites that are difficult to access for reasons of national security.<sup>8</sup>

## II. THE 2007 AND 2009 CONSTRUCTION WORKS: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE AFFECTED AREAS

The trenches dug by military contractors in 2007 were located in the Lower Bala Hissar, in the centre of the plateau, which stretches to the north of the upper fort (Figs. 2–3). This part of the fort was the location of numerous structures of significant historical value. The lower enclosure was the setting in which many uneasy, fractious relationships were played out, both among Afghan elites and within the geopolitical arena of the First and Second Anglo-Afghan Wars. Sir William Macnaghten, who led the mission that installed Shah Shuja on the Afghan throne in 1839 in place of Dost Muhammad, briefly had his residence here. Brit-

ish forces were billeted in the walled garden (*chahar bagh*) to the south of the palace, which along with its Diwan-i ‘Amm pavilion is visible in photographs dating to 1880 (Fig. 1: garden, no. 3; palace, no. 6; pavilion, no. 12).<sup>9</sup> The royal residence fell into disrepair during this period, and was later moved to the outskirts of Kabul by Abdur Rahman Khan (amir of Afghanistan, 1880–1901). A military academy was built on the site of the royal palace and court in the late 1930s and faint outlines of its walls can be discerned on Figure 3. More recently, an uprising against Communist rule broke out at the site in 1979, prior to the Soviet invasion later that year, and was put down following heavy bombing.<sup>10</sup>

Most of the non-royal structures in the Bala Hissar, including the Armenian quarter, the buildings occupied in 1879 by the ill-fated British Resident Sir Louis Cavagnari and the domestic and commercial quarters that grew up around the palace and gardens, were obliterated, either accidentally through arsenal explosions in 1879, wilfully by the occupying British forces the following year to clear lines of fire in preparation for an attack, or during the violence of later, well-documented conflicts.<sup>11</sup> In particular, the fierce fighting in and around the site in the early 1990s destroyed almost all the extant standing architecture in the Lower Bala Hissar, and left the site pitted with shell holes and scattered with unexploded ordnance and mines.<sup>12</sup> Satellite images show the site of Cavagnari’s Residency, towards the south-eastern side of the lower fort, as marked with trenches, presumably from recent conflicts.<sup>13</sup> With the exception of the remaining sections of the massive perimeter walls, therefore, the primary surviving historic value of the site resides in its subterranean, archaeological remains, which have been compromised by the recent construction works, and in its symbolic value as the scene of Afghan resistance against successive invaders.

intriguing site. We are grateful to David Jurie of DAFA for sharing information about these excavations with us prior to its publication.

<sup>8</sup> Myers 2010, on the US military base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, is another such example.

<sup>9</sup> The evidence for many of the Bala Hissar’s historic structures has been collated and analysed by Bill Woodburn and will not be revisited in detail here; Woodburn 2009: 5, fig. 45.

<sup>10</sup> Woodburn 2009: 41; Vogelsang 2002: 307.

<sup>11</sup> Woodburn 2009: 32, 34–37, figs. 44–46; for the development and situation of the Armenian quarter, see Lee 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Woodburn 2009: 41–42.

<sup>13</sup> Woodburn 2009: fig. 40 indicates the construction of tanks (for water and/or fuel?) in the area of the Residency, which must also have impacted significantly upon below-ground deposits.



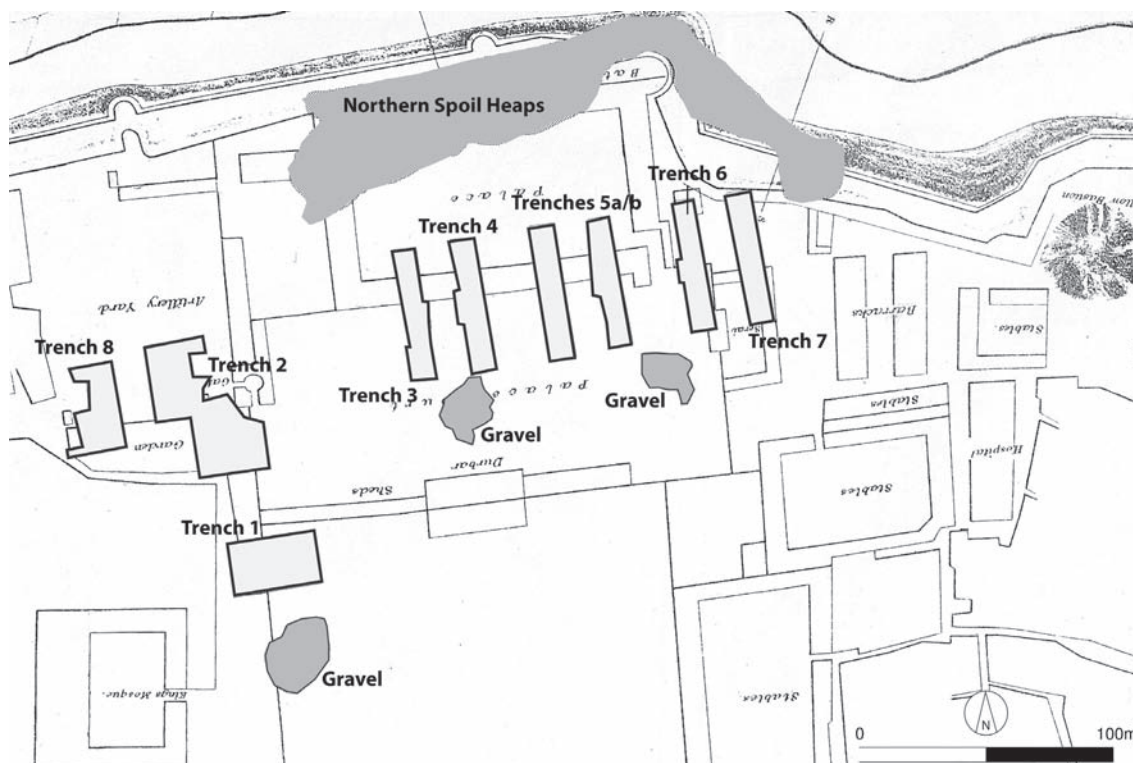


Fig. 2. Plan of the construction trenches and spoil heaps recorded by the authors in July 2007, overlain onto part of the 1879 Ordnance Survey map.

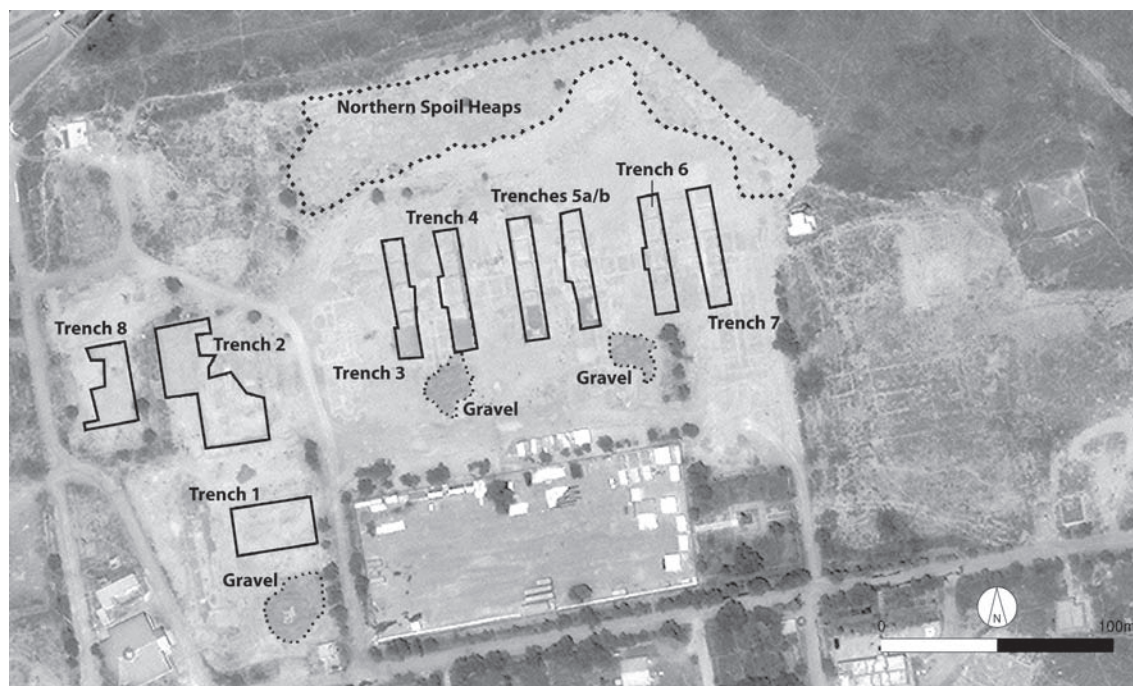
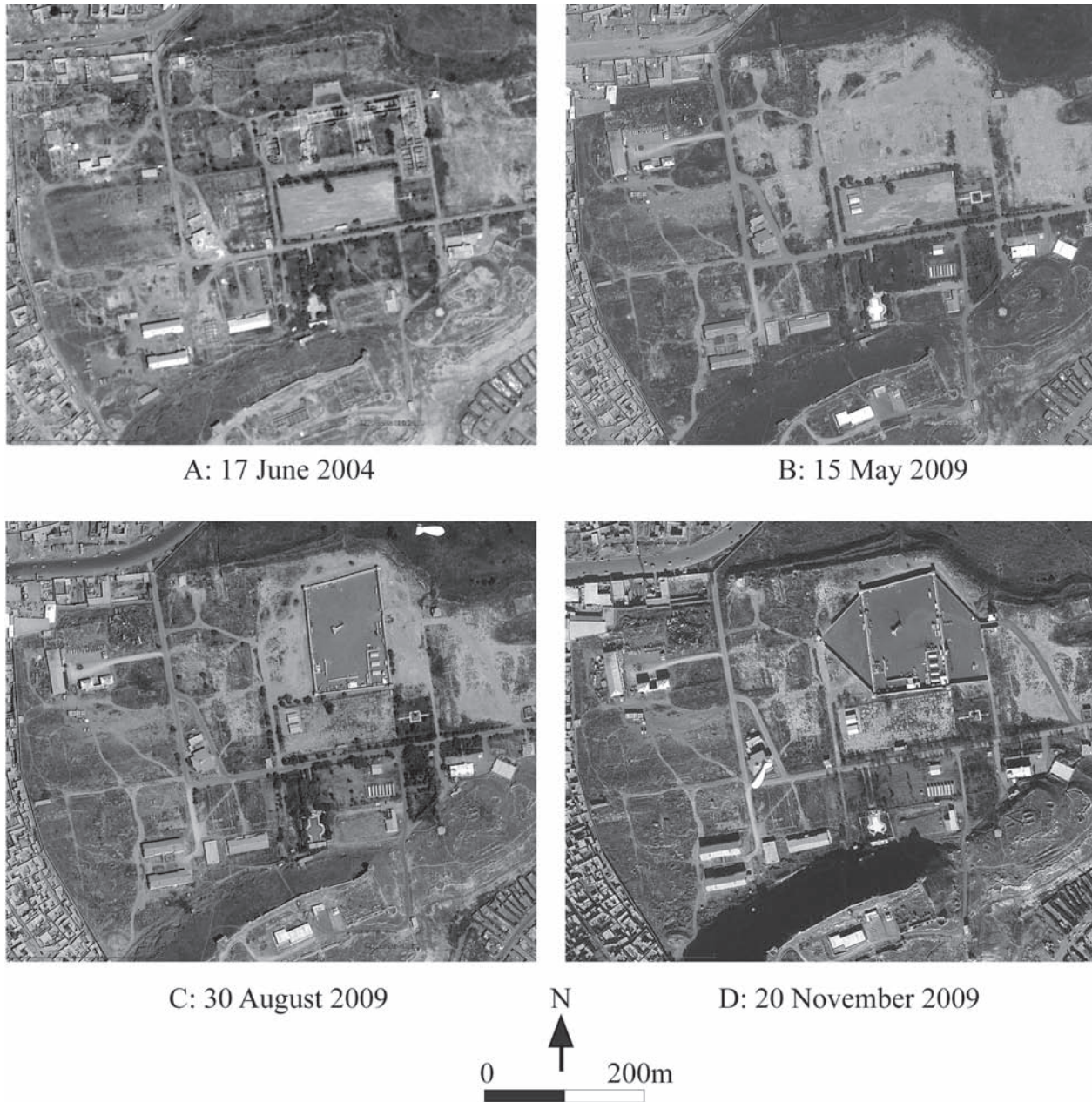


Fig. 3. Plan of the construction trenches overlain onto a satellite image from 19 July 2007 (copyright 2013 DigitalGlobe Incorporated, Longmont CO, USA).



*Fig. 4. Sequence of satellite images from 17 June 2004 to 20 November 2009, showing the expansion of military construction in the Lower Bala Hissar (Google Earth™ map data copyright Google and image providers DigitalGlobe [upper images] and GeoEye [lower images]). Bulldozing and backfilling of the trenches took place between the taking of the first and second images).*

A site visit in July 2007 revealed that the c. 5,300 m<sup>2</sup> of construction trenches had been bulldozed to an average depth of 1 m.<sup>14</sup> Analysis of a

<sup>14</sup> Due to the sensitive nature of the site, we were unable to survey the trenches with Total Station or Global Positioning System, relying instead on hand tapes for measurements

sequence of satellite images available through Google Earth™ subsequently demonstrated that a second programme of works commenced at some point between 9 July and 30 August 2009, with the construction

and correlating our sketch plans with satellite images of the site by means of readily identifiable landmarks.



of a large compound, apparently housing a missile launcher, covering 12,300 m<sup>2</sup> in the centre of the site, and an additional 9,950 m<sup>2</sup> of gravel being laid to the east and west of the compound walls (Fig. 4: C–D). This later construction phase overlies, but appears to be otherwise unrelated to, the trenches inspected in 2007; it thus represents another major impact upon the archaeological and aesthetic value of the site that has gone unreported and unmonitored.

We will now consider in turn the most significant historical structures—the Military Academy, palace, mosque and residential areas—that comparison of historic maps with the satellite images indicates must have been affected by the recent construction works. We will also present the architectural remains and material culture documented during our archaeological impact assessment, in light of historical data.

### *II.1. The Military Academy*

The civil war of 1929 caused considerable destruction to Kabul and necessitated rebuilding from 1930 onwards. Work commenced on a new, modern, Afghan Military Academy in 1933, situated in the Lower Bala Hissar on the site of the earlier palace and palace court, and this complex remained in use from 1938 to 1969.<sup>15</sup> Photographs of the Academy as it neared completion show it to have been a long, two-storey establishment, with an exercise ground and a large park with young shrubs, and an aerial view of Kabul taken in 1965 shows the Academy, with the area around it by this time being quite built up.<sup>16</sup> The Academy structure was not completely destroyed by recent conflicts as it showed clearly in satellite imagery taken in 2004 (Fig. 4: A), and more faintly, in 2007 (Fig. 3), despite being levelled, presumably at the time of the 2007 construction work. The remnant walls and foundations were cut in many places by trenches 3, 4, 5a, 5b, 6 and 7, and were clearly visible in section (Fig. 5).<sup>17</sup> Built of stone and baked brick, several of

the walls have associated white plaster surfaces and are of considerable size, being 1.4 m wide and 0.7 m high. As one would expect, the trenches yielded a significant number of artefacts, including fragments of white (and a few pale pink) bathroom-style tiles,<sup>18</sup> yellow-painted wall plaster, and the spout of a metal teapot.<sup>19</sup> Severed electrical cables and a cement pipe were revealed in section below the surface of trench 4. Although not particularly illuminating in themselves, the structural remains and associated artefacts salvaged from the bulldozed trenches illustrate the potential to reconstruct a detailed plan of the Military Academy, and to examine aspects of the use of space within the building.

### *II.2. The royal palace and gardens*

As noted above, the Military Academy was built over what had been the dominant structure of the Lower Bala Hissar in the nineteenth century, the royal palace.<sup>20</sup> Although the palace may have had its origins in the Mughal period—the fourth Mughal emperor Jahangir demolished existing buildings in 1607 to construct a palace and audience hall—this royal complex, with its associated buildings and gardens, took a more well-documented form when Timur Shah Durrani (r. 1773–93) moved the capital from Kandahar to Kabul in 1775. The palace was further renovated by his son Shah Shuja.<sup>21</sup> In 1832, British deserter, traveller and agent Charles Masson wrote that the palace “is most substantially constructed, and the interior is distributed into a variety of handsome and capacious areas, surrounded by suites of apartments on a commodious

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work at the site of Babylon in Iraq (Curtis 2005).

<sup>18</sup> The tiles had textile impressions on the back, and one preserved part of a maker’s mark “...ALIERA...” on its reverse.

<sup>19</sup> A copper-alloy 5 paisa coin dating from AH 1313 (AD 1895–96) was also found, and clearly pre-dates the Academy. This coin was produced after the 1890 currency reforms of Abdur Rahman, which made the Kabuli rupee the only currency in Afghanistan, and introduced English minting machines into the country; previous coinage was irregular and hand-struck (Noelle 1997: 398–400). Metal finds from the Bala Hissar were conserved by Jane Hamill, and all artefacts were deposited with the Afghan National Museum in Kabul at the end of the study.

<sup>20</sup> Masson 1842, II: 254–58, esp. the sketch on p. 257; Woodburn 2009: 4, 16–22; Schinasi 2008: 43.

<sup>21</sup> Woodburn 2009: 4, 16–23.

<sup>15</sup> Schinasi 2008: 183–84; Dupree N.H. 1972.

<sup>16</sup> The photographs in question are for the most part in private collections and have not been seen by the authors; they are reported by Schinasi 2008: 183–84, pl. 35.

<sup>17</sup> By the time of our visit, the southern end of trenches 3 and 4 had been levelled and covered with fine gravel. It was not possible to ascertain in the time available whether the gravel was sterile or whether it contained cultural material from elsewhere, as happened during military construction



*Fig. 5. View north along trench 4 towards the north spoil heaps; the walls visible in section are those of the Military Academy.*

and magnificent scale. These are embellished with ornamental carvings, and highly coloured paintings of flowers, fruit, and other devices”.<sup>22</sup> In 1836, British traveller Godfrey Vigne noted a recent redesign of the gardens, with the addition of the pavilions at either end.<sup>23</sup> By 1839, however, British Lieutenants Nash and Havelock noted how dilapidated the palace had become, and that the collapse of the audience chamber roof had nearly killed Shah Shuja.<sup>24</sup> Barracks built in that year with British troops in mind were instead

taken over by Shah Shuja for the use of his family.<sup>25</sup> By the 1870s, the palace had been replaced by a new structure to the east, Sher Ali Khan’s (r. 1863–66, 1868–79) palace, and the old building was given over to less high-status activities: during the second British occupation in 1879–80, it housed Gurkhas.<sup>26</sup>

The Lower Bala Hissar was so run down by the late nineteenth century that Amir Abdur Rahman Khan decided to build a new palace elsewhere. Indeed, according to British diplomat Sir Mortimer Durand, Abdur Rahman deliberately left the shell of Sher Ali’s palace in the Lower Bala Hissar standing in order to contrast it with the splendour of his new residence, but the fate of the palace pre-dating that of Sher Ali is not known.<sup>27</sup> Abdur Rahman’s physician from 1885–89, Dr

<sup>22</sup> Masson 1842, II: 257–58. For more information on Charles Masson, see Whitterage 1986. Echoes of the appearance of these paintings may perhaps be found in the beautiful frescoes of flowers and birds that are still preserved in a bathhouse in the Upper Bala Hissar, Herat.

<sup>23</sup> Vigne 1843: 164–65.

<sup>24</sup> Woodburn 2009: 19; Kaye 1874, II: 141.

<sup>25</sup> Woodburn 2009: 19; Kaye 1874, II: 141.

<sup>26</sup> Woodburn 2009: 26, fig. 20.

<sup>27</sup> Cited in Woodburn 2009: 41.

John Gray, noted that the Lower Bala Hissar “is now almost all in ruins or demolished. The gateway stands, and a part of the old [again presumably Sher Ali’s] palace. This is used as a prison for women, political prisoners, Hazaras, and others. The wall and the moat exist, and inside, some rough barracks have been built for a few troops”.<sup>28</sup> By 1912, structures in the Lower Bala Hissar had been completely dismantled.<sup>29</sup>

Faint outlines on a 2004 satellite image available through Google Earth™ may indicate the northern range of the older palace (Fig. 4: A). It was built on top of the defensive walls of the Lower Bala Hissar, looking northwards over the countryside. Immediately to the south of this structure lay the palace court, formerly the site of the Dafta Khana, or record office, a “very gay” building until its demolition by Dost Muhammad;<sup>30</sup> and the Durbar Khana or audience hall. South of the court lay the palace gardens.<sup>31</sup> One area that may retain some archaeological potential, as indicated by the satellite imagery (Fig. 4: A–D), is the site of the raised pavilion located on the south side of the garden, now situated at the base of the slope of the Upper Bala Hissar between a modern swimming pool and an unidentified structure; this pavilion was used as officers’ quarters in 1839.<sup>32</sup>

Trenches 3, 4, 5a, 5b, 6 and 7, as noted above, cut through substantial recent walls associated with the Military Academy. No walls were visible in section that could be connected with the earlier palace. The stone walls of the Military Academy, however, were sunk deeply into the ground, and the construction of their foundations (as well as the sheer number of the walls themselves), must have turned over the ground long before the current works. Substantial or obvious preservation of Mughal-era buildings should perhaps not be expected given the predominant use of perishable or reusable materials such as mud or earth and (recycled and recyclable) wood; Woodburn has suggested that it may have been as easy to demolish and build anew as to repair, and the ground level in the fort may have risen as a result.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the northern ends of the recent trenches were shallower, with compacted ramps to provide access for the bulldozers to

the spoil-heaps on the northern edge of the plateau. It seems unlikely that, in this central area at least, much of the palace could have survived.

Something of the style of the fort walls and palace architecture, although not the palace itself, can be seen in Irish photographer John Burke’s 1880 panoramic image of the Bala Hissar.<sup>34</sup> Any extant structural remains of this northern range, however, are now buried by the extensive heaps of soil and rubble that were dug from the recent trenches and dumped over the edge of the plateau. The archaeological survival or otherwise of the possible palace walls that can be traced on the satellite images was thus unverifiable; perhaps the spoil heaps will provide the best defence for whatever remains of this important structure in the future.

### *II.3. The mosque of the amirs*

Structures servicing the palace were located around it in the Lower Bala Hissar, but with the declining status of the site as the court moved elsewhere, the gardens, *diwan khana*s (traditional buildings opening onto a central courtyard) and shrines were allowed to decay. Many were pulled down by local inhabitants who recycled the building materials, particularly the wooden roof beams.<sup>35</sup> The Royal Mosque, which may have originated in the seventeenth century (a mosque in the Lower Bala Hissar was said to have been built by the sixth Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, r. 1658–1707),<sup>36</sup> was protected from demolition, but had become a ruin by the time of Masson’s stay in Kabul in the 1830s.<sup>37</sup> As we have seen elsewhere at the site as a whole, the capricious nature of royal patronage contributed to its decline, and it suffered from wilful neglect during the reign of Dost Muhammad, who may have resented its associations with the Durrani whom he had overthrown.<sup>38</sup> Little architectural information is available on this historic mosque, although it appears (probably in idealised form) in British army surgeon and artist James Atkinson’s panoramic sketch of Kabul dating from 1839.<sup>39</sup> Later plans and drawings show no sign

<sup>28</sup> Gray J.A. 1890–91: 29.

<sup>29</sup> Adamec 1985: 324.

<sup>30</sup> Masson 1842, II: 256.

<sup>31</sup> See Woodburn 2009: 20–23, esp. fig. 28 for an axonometric reconstruction of the palace.

<sup>32</sup> Woodburn 2009: 20–22, fig. 27.

<sup>33</sup> Woodburn 2009: 7.

<sup>34</sup> Khan 2002: 123–25.

<sup>35</sup> Woodburn 2009: 31, 41.

<sup>36</sup> Woodburn 2009: 4.

<sup>37</sup> Masson 1842, II: 258.

<sup>38</sup> Woodburn 2009: 22.

<sup>39</sup> Reprinted in Woodburn 2009: 24, fig. 29.



of the mosque; instead two blocks of military quarters are found in the area, slightly further to the south.<sup>40</sup>

Trench 1, fortunately, appears to have been cut into deposits to the north-east of the Royal Mosque, missing the location of any extant archaeological remains associated with that structure. Some evidence can be identified, however, for the nature of the mosque's immediate surroundings. The exposed sections in the east and south, which are of considerable depth (1.4 m), show little by way of architectural remains and the trench appears to be dug into silty fill or wash. Ashy layers are visible in the south-west, with comparable lenses in the west and north sections, but these are not visibly related to a major structure. More significantly, a fragment of a human cranium in the south-west section may provide evidence for burials near the mosque, and further pieces of human bone were observed on the northern spoil heap. Masson recorded a strong local belief that the Bala Hissar was once a cemetery, while British political agent Sir Alexander Burnes (killed in Kabul in 1841) noted "burying-grounds" in or near the Lower Bala Hissar.<sup>41</sup> Our observations support the presence of a graveyard in the vicinity of the Royal Mosque.

#### *II.4. The artillery yard, bazaar area and town*

No historically attested structures are known to have been located in the vicinity of trenches 2 and 8, which might have cut through the edge of the artillery yard and into the bazaar area. The Lower Bala Hissar, outside the palace complex, gradually became more plebeian over time as people dependent upon the royal court for their livelihoods built houses and a bazaar in the vicinity over the following decades. The area must have been fairly densely built up: Burnes, who resided in the Lower Bala Hissar for some time, recorded a population of some 5,000 people in the early 1830s.<sup>42</sup> Lieutenant Henry Durand's 1839 report on the fortifications for the British army recommended the clearance of all private dwellings within the Bala Hissar, but this was not carried out until 1879.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Woodburn 2009: figs. 44–45.

<sup>41</sup> Masson 1842, II: 253; Burnes 1843: 266; as noted above, Schinasi records large Sunni cemeteries to the south of the Bala Hissar, including many places associated with local saints (2008: 56–57).

<sup>42</sup> Burnes 1834: 56; Schinasi 2008: 43; Woodburn 2009: 5, 22.

<sup>43</sup> Durand's report is quoted in MacGregor 1871: 441.

Trench 2 was considerably deeper and less neatly finished than trench 1, but like trench 1, it had little coherent archaeological material other than ashy lenses visible in the east section, although the remnants of a stone wall were noted in the east end of the south section. The northern, unfinished part of the trench contained a jumble of baked bricks, bone, ceramics and other debris of uncertain date. To the west, trench 8 was left unfinished and at the time of inspection in 2007 resembled a ploughed field. Large quantities of ceramics, bone and stone were visible in the disturbed soil, presumably indicative of the situation of the other trenches prior to their being topped with gravel. A small, mortared wall, standing seven courses (0.9 m) high, was noted in the south-east corner of the trench. Other features included a possible stone-lined drain. The architecture exposed in these sections appears to be relatively recent.

Additionally, an area in the north-west corner of the Lower Bala Hissar, just inside the now disappeared Derwaza Naqqara Khana, or city gate, has also been impacted by the recent build-up of military infrastructure (Fig. 4: A–D). A public road cutting across the edge of the site was widened, and inside the military area buildings were erected and a parking area created. What historic structures, if any, may have been impacted by this development is unclear. British plans from the First and Second Anglo-Afghan Wars only note the presence of the road running from the palace area to the city gate; the military engineers did not map the dense housing that covered this area.<sup>44</sup> We were not able to inspect this part of the site during our 2007 visit.

#### *II.5. The Upper Bala Hissar*

The expansion of construction associated with the ongoing use of the site as a military base has not been restricted to the Lower Bala Hissar. For the upper fort, analysis of imagery available through Google Earth™ also indicates the development of infrastructure over areas of historical significance during the last decade (Fig. 4: A–D). Inevitably, these developments will have impacted upon the historical remains in the area. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Upper Bala Hissar contained a prison complex, where sons of Timur Shah were imprisoned following a succession dispute after his death in 1793, as

<sup>44</sup> Woodburn 2009: figs. 5, 29, 30, 44.

was deposed ruler Mahmoud Shah in 1803 (who later escaped).<sup>45</sup> A building known as the Kulah-i Firangi or “European’s hat” was noted by Burnes *c.* 1832. It was demolished by 1839, apparently because it overlooked the palace area of the Lower Bala Hissar, and seems to have been located at the eastern end of the upper fort.<sup>46</sup> During his 1836 visit, Vigne noted that the Upper Bala Hissar as well as the Lower, was in considerable need of repair.<sup>47</sup> British army engineer Lieutenant John Leigh Sturt’s 1839 plan indicates ruined walls; likewise, in the 1830s Masson described the upper fort as empty and ruinous, but noted the presence of marble sitting platforms on the north side.<sup>48</sup> There is not enough evidence to examine the situation of these particular structures in any detail, but the Upper Bala Hissar is arguably a location in which some evidence of pre-Mughal activity might be expected, and thus the damage to this area and the lack of archaeological investigation are significant. As with the city gate area, we were unable to visit this part of the site.

### III. THE CERAMIC EVIDENCE

So far we have considered structures known from historic sources, in particular those documented by participants in the Anglo-Afghan wars of the nineteenth century, although as noted above, the origins of the Bala Hissar are thought to pre-date this period considerably. Investigation of the 2007 trenches identified the first explicit archaeological indications of early and pre-Islamic activity on the site, in the form of ceramics. In addition to recording the locations and sections of the trenches, surface pottery was collected on two occasions: during our first, brief visit, a few pieces were picked up from trench 2 and the large northern spoil heaps (NSH), with an additional collection being made across the whole area by members of NAIA. During our subsequent visit, sherds were collected systematically from each trench (Fig. 6). Although small and unstratified, this collection provides the means to consider the area in terms of the ceramic assemblages in use at the site over time and, to the authors’ knowledge, represents the first archaeological publication of post-Timurid ceramics in existence.

At first glance, the distribution of sherds indicates that the most prolific exposed archaeological contexts should lie at the western end of the area into which the trenches were cut, with trenches 2 and 8 yielding the most fragments. Trenches 2 and 8, along with trench 1, also yielded pre-Islamic sherds. These western trenches, and the central ones (trenches 4 and 5), also contained some early modern ceramic material, reflecting the known use of the site in Mughal times. Trenches 3 to 7 were less productive, with the most common ceramic type being white-glazed porcelain tile pieces of twentieth-century date. It should be noted, however, that trenches 1, 3 and 4 had been cleaned and their bottoms had been compacted and/or overlain with gravel. Consequently, few sherds were recovered. Ceramics from trenches 5 and 7 were scarce for similar reasons. The distribution of pottery therefore probably reflects the state of the individual trenches at the time that work was stopped as much as their potential archaeological significance.

#### *III.1. Recording and analysis of the ceramic assemblage*

Pottery was collected by means of a 100% diagnostics (here defined as anything indicative of a specific form or identifiable as a particular ware) pick-up policy in the trenches and around the spoil heaps. This resulted in a total assemblage of 178 sherds, presented in full in the Appendix below. A series of fabric groups was defined, all sherds were catalogued and a sub-sample of 96 sherds was drawn. Where possible sherds were assigned to broad phases, in order to investigate the history of activity at the Bala Hissar over the long term (Fig. 7). These phases were: “modern” (eighteenth to twenty-first century); “early modern” (fifteenth to seventeenth century); “mediaeval” (eighth to fourteenth century); and “pre-Islamic” (seventh century and earlier).

At 178 sherds (all quantification is by sherd count), the size of the assemblage is too small to yield more than a preliminary insight into the historic ceramic traditions of the Kabul area, but in light of the lack of available data for recent ceramic production in Afghanistan, it is hoped that it may nonetheless represent a useful contribution to future work. In the absence of many published parallels, especially for the most recent phases of activity, the judgements presented here must be regarded as subject to ongoing

<sup>45</sup> Vogelsang 2002: 237–40; Schinasi 2008: 42.

<sup>46</sup> Woodburn 2009: 5.

<sup>47</sup> Vigne 1843: 164.

<sup>48</sup> Woodburn 2009: 16.

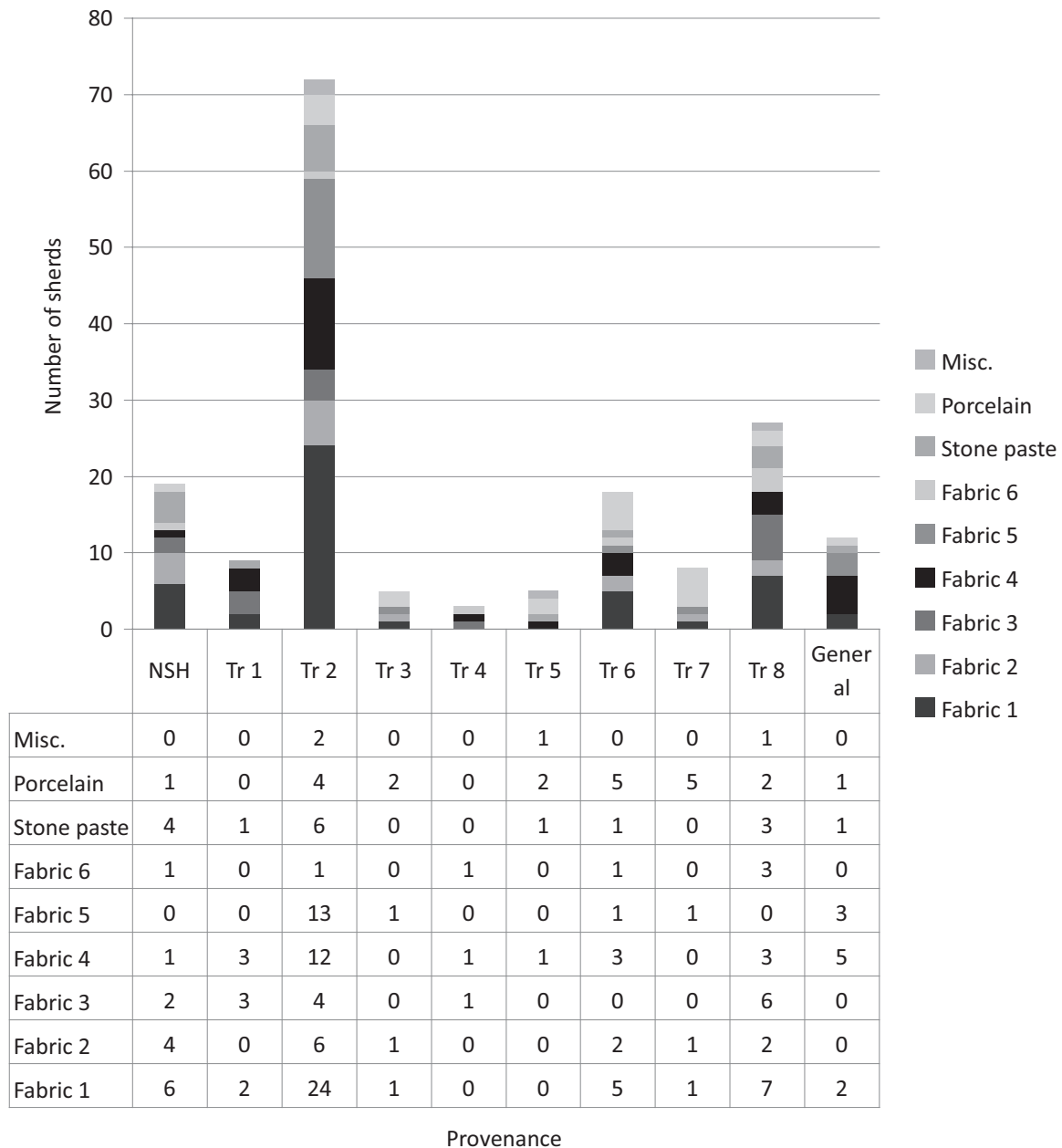


Fig. 6. Summary of the surface ceramic collection by fabric group (see Appendix) and find-spot (NSH: Northern Spoil Heaps; Tr: Trench; General: collection made across whole area by colleagues from NAIA).

ing revision as more data, especially from excavations, comes to light. As Roland Besenval has noted, “[w]hereas Ghaznavid and Ghorid ceramics have become sufficiently familiar through excavations in Lashkari Bazar, Balkh, Ghazna and Kandahar, Timurid every day wares and pottery of the 16th–19/20th

century are hardly known”.<sup>49</sup> Although some identifications were found by consulting historic photographs, for example of Afghan market scenes, it must be said that the situation described by Besenval is also that experienced by the current authors. Justifications

<sup>49</sup> Besenval n.d.



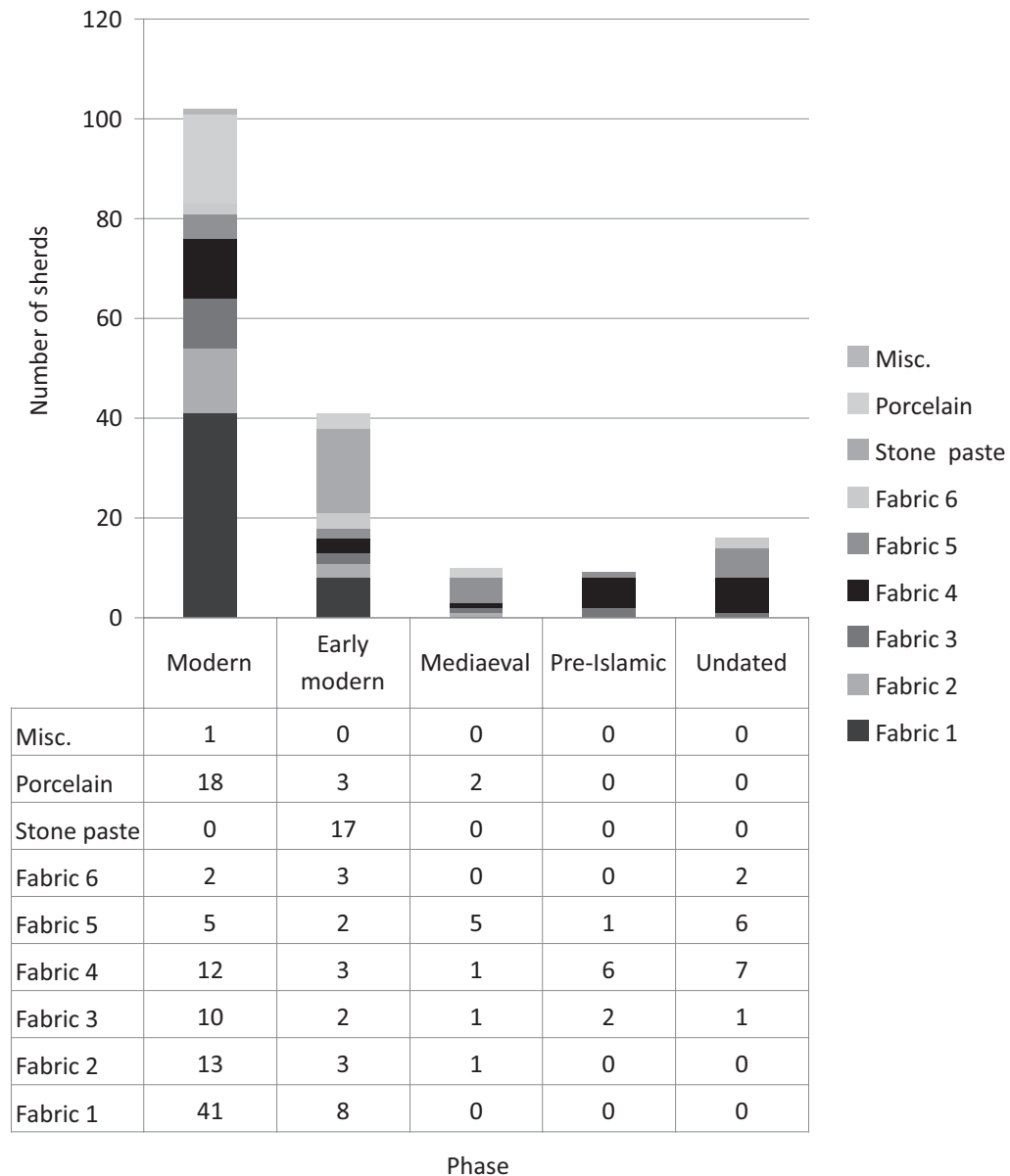


Fig. 7. Summary of the surface ceramic collection by phase and fabric group. Clearly, the time periods compared are of unequal length, and this graph thus cannot be read as a straightforward index of activity through time.

for the dating assigned here to the major wares can be found in the Appendix.

Unsurprisingly, the majority of the assemblage can be attributed to relatively recent times (Fig. 8). The modern phase (eighteenth to twenty-first centuries) is dominated by a series of brightly coloured and cheerful, but not highly technically accomplished, glazed wares, frequently made using fabric group 1 (Figs.

13–18). The most common coarse ware is casually splashed with red slip (Figs. 19–20). Formally, the black-on-turquoise (Fig. 13) and the monochrome-glazed wares (Figs. 15–18) have considerable similarity, with simple-rimmed bowls dominating, while the incised bowls from the production centre of Istalif, c. 40 km to the north of Kabul, have a greater incidence of everted or modelled rims (Fig. 14). The small sam-

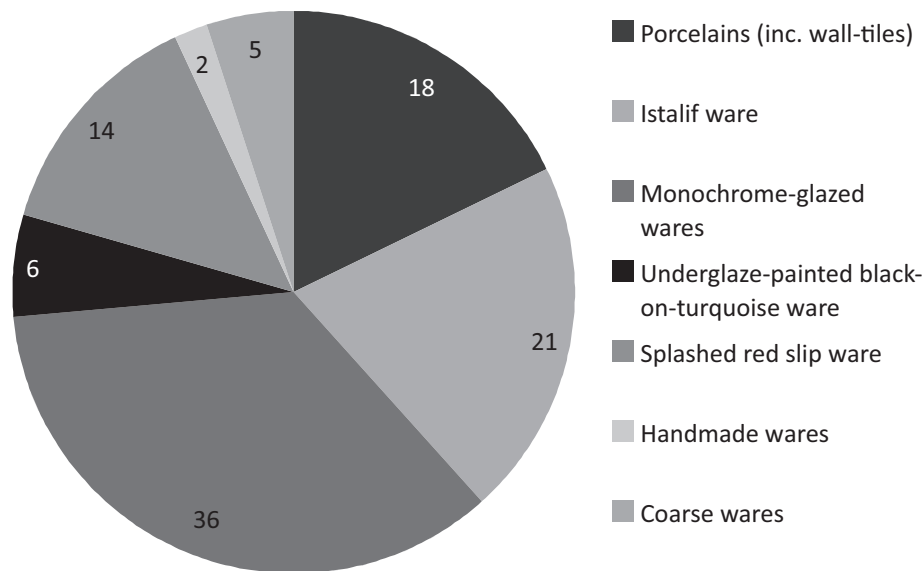


Fig. 8. Pottery attributed to the “modern” phase, subdivided by ware.

ple size has been noted above, but we might speculate that the monochrome-glazed wares represent a local Kabuli industry, while the Istalif wares were traded into the city.

The possible sources and purposes of these wares are worth exploring. Alexander Burnes considered Kabul’s importance to lie in its commercial advantages, rather than stemming from its status as the seat of government.<sup>50</sup> Charles Masson likewise emphasised the role of Kabul as a trading entrepôt for routes from Turkestan to India, and the dispenser of goods to surrounding districts.<sup>51</sup> The ceramics collected during our survey may thus provide some insight into the trade connections of the Bala Hissar, and of Kabul more generally. It is particularly interesting to look at the provision of pottery to Kabul in light of the city’s geopolitical situation, which in the nineteenth century at least reflected tensions between Russia and British India in the area, especially since this was manifested in a strong impetus to trade on both sides. Like their predecessors, the Timurid rulers of Afghanistan oversaw what was in large part an external plunder economy, based on gains made from raiding areas away from core Afghan territory, in particular the northern Indian sphere. British peripheralisation of Afghanistan,

and the increasing power of British Sikh allies in the Punjab, substantially reduced Afghan opportunities in this area, leading to a transition to an internalised plunder economy, combined with money raised on transit goods. Trade-related, protectionist imperialism was a key aspect of British policy in Afghanistan—Alexander Burnes’s first mission in 1831 was to survey the Indus for navigation—but British economic initiatives were designed to increase power through prestige as much as for economic gain.<sup>52</sup>

Trade routes certainly ran into Kabul from Russia via Bukhara, and William Moorcroft remarked in 1822 that British manufactured goods could be more cheaply imported overland via Russia than through India.<sup>53</sup> Lists provided by Burnes of goods from Russia, India and Europe available in the bazaars of Kabul include Russian porcelain from Bukhara and English porcelain from Delhi.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, Masson noted in a letter dated 1836 that a caravan of goods recently arrived from Bukhara included “china ware”, although where these ceramics originated from he does not record.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Burnes 1843: 369.

<sup>51</sup> Masson 1842, II: 288.

<sup>52</sup> Hopkins 2008: 47–51; Robson 1986: 29.

<sup>53</sup> Hopkins 2008: 219, n. 31; on p. 48 Hopkins notes also that “British Indian goods were reportedly sold for 200 times their Bombay price in the Kabul bazaar”.

<sup>54</sup> Burnes 1843: 301–02; see also Hopkins 2008: 144–48.

<sup>55</sup> Hopkins 2008: 147, 221, n. 79.

John Gray, describing Kabul tea-shops some decades later, wrote that, “[t]he teapots, cups, and saucers in use are generally from Russia. Some of the richer men have them from China or Japan”.<sup>56</sup>

No sherds of Russian origin have been unequivocally identified in our assemblage. The only pieces of European porcelain for which a point of origin can be fixed are a twentieth-century Czech bathroom fitting and a late eighteenth-century *famille rose* style cup from Staffordshire (Fig. 10, nos. 4, 2). The impact of the Great Game on trade, which was clearly a major subject of nineteenth-century diplomatic correspondence, thus remains obscure in our ceramic assemblage, but the preponderance of local wares is of interest in itself.

Lieutenant James Rattray, who was in Kabul for the First Anglo-Afghan War, mentioned “porcelain jars of rose-water” on sale in the Char Chatta bazaar shortly before its destruction in 1842.<sup>57</sup> The provenance of the jars is unclear, but the rose water seems likely to be local. Regarding local industries more generally, Charles Masson remarked that, “[i]ndeed the manufactures of the country do not rise to mediocrity, and are suitable only to the consumption of the lower and less wealthy classes ... There is not an article made or wrought in Kābal which is not surpassed by specimens from other countries”.<sup>58</sup> To the Afghans, provenance may not have been a primary concern. John Gray’s late Victorian attitudes are reflected in his remark that, “I have often been somewhat surprised at the inability of most Afghans to distinguish a genuine article from an imitation. Merchants make a harvest in the country by taking advantage of this want of knowledge”.<sup>59</sup> Although the nature and quality of its products is unclear, there was certainly local (factory-based) pottery production in Kabul the following century, in 1959.<sup>60</sup>

Reporting to the British authorities in India about domestic taste in pottery, with a view to possible demand for new commodities in the bazaars of Kabul, Masson wrote:

“China-ware is sometimes exported from Bokhāra to Kābal, but generally of ordinary Chinese fabric; it is also in a certain demand which is likely to increase

from the growing habit of tea drinking, &c. Articles of British China-ware are occasionally seen, but they have been brought probably from Bombay rather as presents than as objects for sale. [...] China-ware, stone-ware, and even the superior kinds of earthen-ware would, no doubt, find a sale at Kābal if the charge for their transmission from India would allow the speculation; but the articles should be of a solid nature and fitted for the use of purchasers, as plates, dishes, basins, bowls, teapots, tea-cups, jugs, &c. China-ware, as well as being in quest for use, is employed for ornament and display, every room in a respectable house having its shelves furnished with sets of basins, bowls, &c., &c. These are generally of the coarse fabric of Kābal, China-ware being scarce and too high in price. The earthen-ware of Kābal manufacture is very indifferent, although the country abounds with excellent materials”.<sup>61</sup>

The use of ceramics (among other artefact types) for display within houses was noted by other visitors to Kabul. Dr Lillias Hamilton, physician to the amir, described Abdur Rahman’s palace in the 1890s, noting pleasant interiors decorated with, among other things, “a number of magnificent old Chinese vases, some of which were purchased at the King of Oude’s sale in Calcutta”. The women’s quarters of the palace were described by both Gray and Hamilton, and were very cluttered with ornaments, vases, porcelains, Bohemian glass vessels and such-like. Ceramics were also displayed outside in the European-style palace garden in which there were large porcelain vases of flowers.<sup>62</sup> This palace was of course not one of those located in the Bala Hissar, but the accounts give us an idea of elite tastes during the period. Masson clearly indicates that locally made glazed wares (which might be associated with the brightly coloured wares of our assemblage, among others) fulfilled a similar function for those further down the social scale, as well as having more practical uses.

Moving back in time, the “early modern” phase (fifteenth to seventeenth centuries) is characterised by wares with precise, and sometimes elaborate, underglaze-painted patterns, in blue-on-white, sometimes with the addition of black (Fig. 9). The dominance of blue-on-white and related underglaze-painted wares may reflect Afghanistan’s incorporation into the Persian cultural sphere under Timurid rule. Certainly, blue-on-white pottery vessels appear with reasonable

<sup>56</sup> Gray J.A. 1890–91: 75.

<sup>57</sup> Schinasi 2008: 51.

<sup>58</sup> Masson 1842, II: 288–89.

<sup>59</sup> Gray J.A. 1890–91: 311.

<sup>60</sup> Dupree L. 1980: 532.

<sup>61</sup> Masson quoted in MacGregor 1871: 427–28.

<sup>62</sup> Schinasi 2008: 76–77, 108.



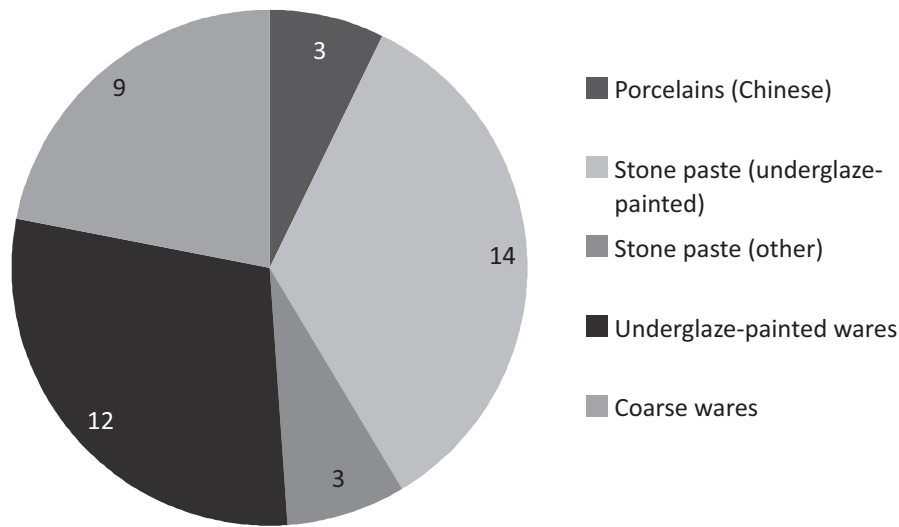


Fig. 9. Pottery attributed to the “early modern” phase, subdivided by ware.

frequency in miniature paintings of the period.<sup>63</sup> This family of pottery is represented by porcelains imported from China (Fig. 10, nos. 8–9) and stone pastes possibly originating in Iran, as well as stone pastes and earthenwares probably of local manufacture (Figs. 11–12), indicating that vessels in this aesthetic group were available in a diversity of quality, technologies, styles and expense. The comparatively low number of coarse wares from this phase may reflect the Bala Hissar’s elite status at this time or, more likely, our difficulties in recognising characteristic coarse wares and forms of this period in light of extremely scant published parallels (Fig. 21).

The “mediaeval” assemblage (eighth to fourteenth centuries) is considerably more limited in size and range. Notable are two sherds of *qingbai* porcelain, imported from southern China, which must date from the very end of our “mediaeval” phase (Fig. 10, nos. 6–7). Earlier in date, perhaps eleventh to thirteenth century, is a single sherd of the distinctive elaborately moulded water jugs found on many sites in Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia (Fig. 22, no. 1). The remaining pieces are coarse wares, dated (some tentatively) on the basis of form and surface finish (Fig. 22). The characteristic glazed wares of the mediaeval period, in particular polychrome incised wares, moulded frit wares, and slip-underpainted wares, are

notable by their absence. We should not, however, read too much into such negative evidence, especially in light of the limited size of our assemblage and the relatively shallow depths of the trenches.

No attempt has been made to assign pieces of the “pre-Islamic” phase to particular production centres (Fig. 23). Sherds were again dated on the basis of form and surface finish, and many were coated with a crimson-red slip that is not commonly seen on later wares, while some were polished. A couple of sherds have published parallels dating back to the Bronze Age, but clearly the assemblage provides only very limited support for activity on the Bala Hissar at such an early date, and further investigations are required.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The tensions between the need to protect archaeological and historical remains, and the desire for development, are not unique to the Bala Hissar or indeed to Afghanistan.<sup>64</sup> Many other sites in Kabul (and elsewhere, e.g. in Herat) are threatened by the surge in post-war building that has taken place in Afghanistan.<sup>65</sup> The entanglement of development programmes with considerable sums of international funding and in the case of the Bala Hissar, issues of national security,

<sup>63</sup> Gray B. 1948–49; Carswell 2000.

<sup>64</sup> See MacManamon and Hatton 2000, *inter alia*.

<sup>65</sup> AKTC 2007a: 2.

often results in the strangling of the heritage voice. Although strong Afghan and international pressure temporarily prevailed in 2007 and legislation to transfer ownership of the site solely to the MoIC was being prepared, this did not prevent considerable further construction work at the Bala Hissar in 2009. Ongoing talk of the site being handed back to MoIC control must, therefore, be treated with a degree of scepticism.

The construction work in the Lower Bala Hissar has caused a significant amount of damage. The area bulldozed in 2007 was much more extensive, and each trench considerably deeper, than we had anticipated. The 2009 works may have primarily affected the surface of the site, but without the active participation of archaeologists during the project, we cannot be certain. The remains of the Military Academy in particular have clearly sustained considerable damage, but had not at the time of our visit been completely destroyed. Whether anything survived the construction of the gravelled missile enclosure is uncertain. In terms of the Mughal architecture on the site, the recycling of wooden elements and the ephemeral nature of the other materials from which buildings were constructed, must speed the ruination of structures following their abandonment. It remains unclear what, if anything, might be preserved beneath the newly constructed military infrastructure (archaeological features such as post holes, surfaces, pits and wall footings might be found should scientific excavation take place). This study has, however, recorded tangible, if sparse, archaeological evidence of pre-Mughal activity at the Bala Hissar, long assumed but not previously demonstrated.

The construction works in the Lower Bala Hissar can be seen as a continuation of the site's long history of cycles of expansion, neglect, refurbishment and ruin. In this context, it is important to recognise that much of the Bala Hissar has not been affected by the recent activity. Nonetheless, the construction works have thrown into focus the lack of a comprehensive management plan for the existing archaeological remains, the haphazard destruction of significant deposits without proper investigation and monitoring, and the lack of transparency and consultation in the process. Properly managed, the collaboration of archaeologists in the works process could significantly increase what we know about the site, and provide an opportunity for training and capacity building for local archaeologists. The deficiencies of the recent works in this respect do a disservice to this rich archaeological

site and, ironically, to the military history of the very people who continue to use it.

## V. APPENDIX: BALA HISSAR CERAMIC CATALOGUE

### *V.1. Fabrics*

The small size of the sample, in combination with the wide date range of the collection and the low level of previous research, especially into the more recent phases of Afghan ceramics, prevented the creation of a universal fabric series. Broad groups were, however, defined by hand-specimen analysis, and detailed fabric descriptions recorded for much of the assemblage (Table 1). The use of visually similar clays for sherds of widely different date, in addition to the presence of diverse fabrics within a single ware (such as the Istalif glazed ceramics), indicates the complexity of this task. Further work on a body of stratified pottery is required to document more fully the fabrics in use through time. Despite this caveat, the most common wares were defined and described, and out of 178 sherds collected, 96 were drawn. This catalogue, while much richer for the early modern to modern periods (fifteenth century onwards), also includes mediaeval and pre-Islamic material.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>66</sup> The sherds were analysed, catalogued and drawn by Alison Gascoigne with the assistance of Leslee Michelsen and Piet Collet; inked drawings are by Will Schenck. Dating of unfamiliar wares is based on the identification of parallels from other published assemblages where available; we have also made the assumption that common wares are likely to be of local manufacture. The authors would like gratefully to acknowledge the help of Ute Franke, of the German Archaeological Institute, and Philippe Marquis of DAFA, in identifying some of the material presented here, on the basis of their considerable (often not yet published) excavation experience in various areas of Afghanistan. This includes in particular Franke's work at the Bagh-e Babur, Kabul and in Herat citadel, where post-Timurid ceramics were recorded.

TABLE 1. Characteristics of the fabric groups defined for the Bala Hissar assemblage.

| Group       | Fabric description  |
|-------------|---|
| 1           | Fine pink or light pink-brown calcitic matrix with moderate to common very fine sand, moderate to common fine limestone, moderate mica, occasional rare coarse quartz, grog and/or fine chaff. Used almost exclusively for a range of glazed wares (2 out of 48 sherds were unglazed) of modern and early modern date.  |
| 2           | Fairly soft, beige and crumbly with moderate to common fine sand; scarce fine to coarse grog; scarce to common coarse quartz; can also be slightly harder and pinker, with abundant sand, especially when used for coarse wares. Used more commonly for glazed wares (in particular better-quality Istalif wares) than unglazed ones.   |
| 3           | Bright brick red, coarse fabric with common to abundant medium to coarse limestone, some coarse sub-rounded quartz, moderate fine to medium dark grey sand, and some mica. Used more or less equally for glazed and unglazed wares.   |
| 4           | Very fine light brown matrix with few inclusions; moderate fine to medium voids, scarce to moderate fine sand, and scarce mica. Used exclusively for unglazed wares, in particular the splashed red slip wares, but also some pre-Islamic pieces.   |
| 5           | Very coarse, porous fabric, fairly hard and light brown to beige, with very abundant mica in large plates both on the surface and in the break, common medium to coarse sub-rounded dark sand and quartz, rare medium grog and black sub-angular fragments. Used, with a single exception, for unglazed wares, including some mediaeval wares.  |
| 6           | Hard, medium-dense, pink-brown or light brown fabric with very abundant fine to medium decomposed limestone, moderate to common coarse quartz, scarce to moderate medium dark grey sand and occasional grog. Uncommon fabric used for both glazed and unglazed wares.   |
| Stone paste | Defined by Watson (2004: 507) as “an ‘artificial’ ceramic body, made from ground quartz with small additions of clay and ground glaze-mixture. The quartz provides the bulk of the body, the clay giving the mixture plasticity before firing and combining during the firing with the glaze to form a glassy matrix that holds the quartz particles together. The final result is a white body with a more-or-less fine ‘sugary’ texture”. |
| Porcelain   | Pure white, vitrified kaolinitic clay with no visible particles or voids; very highly fired and hard.   |

## V.2. Ceramic catalogue

### GLAZED WARES: PORCELAINS (Table 2, Fig. 10)

Seventeen sherds of porcelain found at the Bala Hissar have been ascribed a European origin, of which ten are pieces of tile. Four diagnostic pieces were recorded in detail (Fig. 10, nos. 1–4; no. 5 may be European in origin but this cannot be established with certainty), but specific production centres have been found only for nos. 2 and 4. These difficulties of identification reflect a comparative lack of scholarly research into non-luxury porcelains; this area is largely the preserve of art historians, and publications are based on museum or private collections of high-quality products. More common productions have thus proved difficult to identify, but (with the exception of no. 2 from the late eighteenth century) the sherds presented here are broadly of late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century date, the period following elite abandonment of the site and its use for military purposes.

The sherds of Chinese porcelain (Fig. 10, nos. 6–9) are both earlier in date and higher in quality. Only five Chinese sherds were found, of which four are illus-

trated here (the sixth is a small blue-on-white body sherd). Two pieces of *qingbai* and a fragment of Ming blue-on-white represent products from the fourteenth to late fifteenth/early sixteenth century. As noted above, Chinese porcelains were in demand among the leading families of Kabul for display; these few pieces may slightly pre-date the Mughal conquest of Kabul.

### GLAZED WARES: STONE PASTES (Table 3, Fig. 11)

Glazed underpainted stone paste pottery was widely produced in the Iranian world and beyond. Stone paste production under the Timurids and Safavids has been investigated by means of petrographic analysis.<sup>67</sup> These studies have defined several Timurid ceramic production centres (Samarqand, Nishapur, Mashhad and later Tabriz), each characterised by particular stone paste fabric mixes; the authors of these studies have also tentatively identified some Safavid production centres (Mashhad, Kirman and Isfahan). Doubts remain, however, about the suitability of stone

<sup>67</sup> Golombek, Mason and Bailey 1995; Mason 1996; Mason and Golombek 2003.



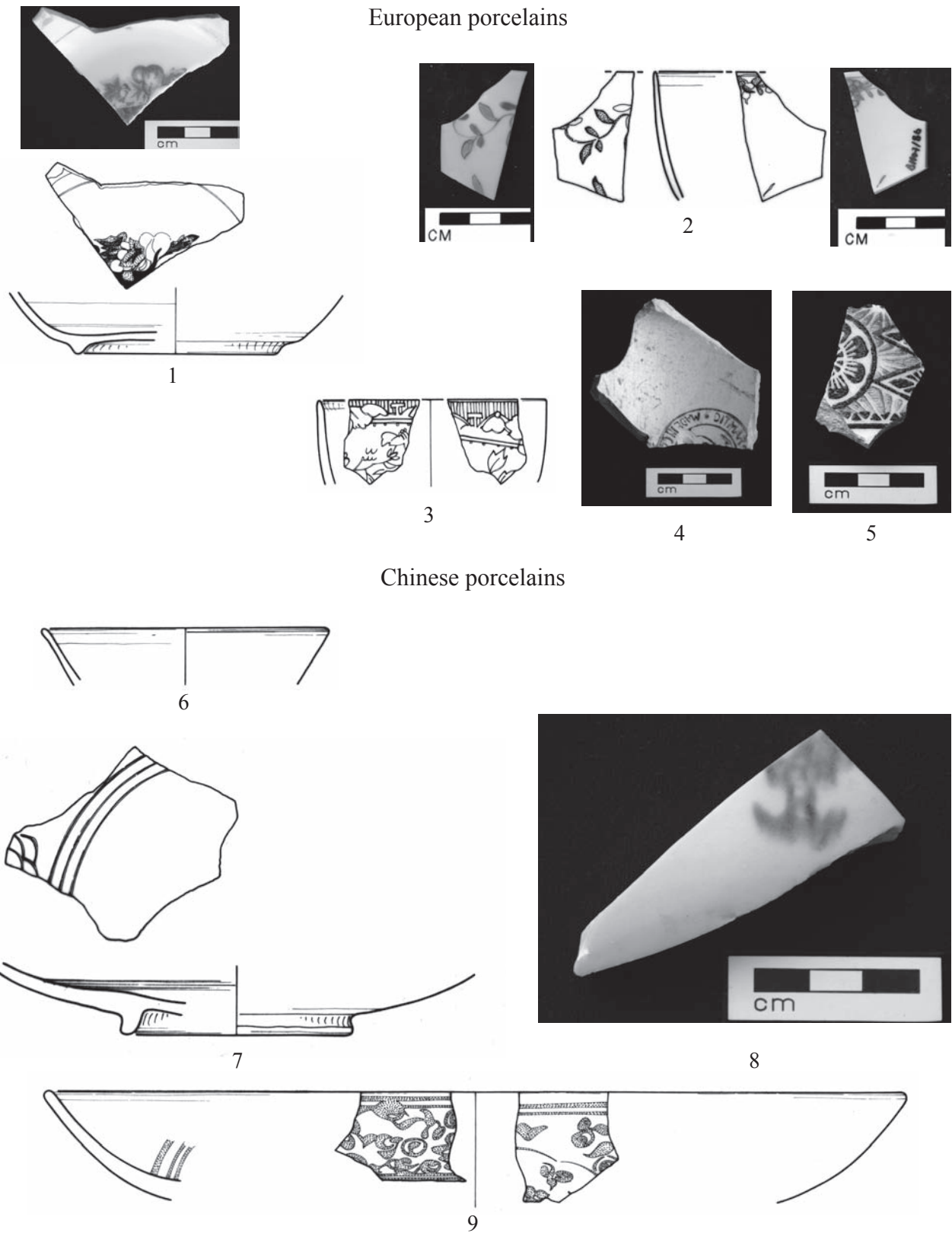


Fig. 10. Porcelains from the Bala Hissar (scale: 50% unless otherwise indicated).

TABLE 2. Descriptions of pottery illustrated in Fig. 10.

| No. | Details   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | Saucer or small dish. Surfaces: coated all over in thick, even clear glaze; interior has lines of gold and a lithograph-printed motif of purple and red fruit and green leaves in the centre; under the base is the edge of a red manufacturer's inscription, possibly an M or an N. The origins of this piece are unclear. It may be a product of Victorian Britain (George Haggarty, pers. com.). Lithograph-printed pottery was introduced into Britain in the 1890s, but was used in Germany slightly earlier, perhaps from the end of the 1880s, and the piece may be of European (German?) origin; the thin gilding is typical of the end of the nineteenth century (Miranda Goodby, pers. com.). It should also be noted, however, that the maker's mark may resemble the rust-red, stamped, factory mark "Made in Russia", found on Russian porcelain from the 1920s (Lobanov-Rostovsky 1990: 156, marks 1–2). Diameter (base): 7 cm (22%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/17.   |
| 2   | Cup or small bowl of Staffordshire <i>famille rose</i> style ware. Surfaces: design of pink flowers and green leaves outlined in black enamel on exterior; interior has design of pink flowers outlined in darker pink, and green leaves outlined in black, below a narrow orange stripe just below the rim; all surfaces are coated in a clear glaze. <i>Famille rose</i> became popular from c. 1720 following technical developments in the production of pink glaze tones, and continued into the nineteenth century (Lange 2005: 153). This example has the enamelled flower-sprig decoration characteristic of late eighteenth-century products of the New Hall pottery, Shelton (Stoke-on Trent), Staffordshire, and its imitators (Holgate 1987: e.g. pattern 297 [colour pl. M] and pattern 594 [187, pl. 268], <i>inter alia</i> ). Provenance: Northern Spoil Heaps (NSH). Drawing: BH07/86.   |
| 3   | Small bowl with upright walls. Fabric: less highly fired than no. 1, with a slightly more powdery than vitrified appearance. Surfaces: thin, even coat of clear glaze inside and out, fired to a crackled finish, over a blue transfer-printed design. The origins of this piece are unclear, but a possible British source has been suggested (George Haggarty, pers. com.). A piece of different form but with a clearly related transfer design exists in the Southampton University Archaeology teaching collection (AG, pers. obs.), which may likewise support a British origin. The piece must post-date the invention of transfer printing in the mid-eighteenth century, but a nineteenth- or even early twentieth-century date may be more likely. Diameter: 8 cm (10%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/18.  |
| 4   | Fragment of bathroom ware made of unglazed pale matte porcelain. The interior is stamped with the swan maker's mark of Ditmar-Urbach pottery, Czechoslovakia. The Ditmar and Urbach factories combined c. 1912, and the resulting company was taken over by the Nazis in 1938, then nationalised and converted to Ostmark-Ceramics in 1945. (Compensation for the loss of the factory was paid to a descendant of the former, Jewish, owner Richard Lichtenstein at a Claims Resolution Tribunal in 2003.) A swan trademark for Ditmar-Urbach was registered by American Standard, a company making bathroom ceramics, in 1953 (mark no. 170187, <a href="http://www.wipo.int/romarin/detail.do?ID=0">www.wipo.int/romarin/detail.do?ID=0</a> , accessed 14 March 2013). The version of the stamp on this sherd is considered to date from 1920–45, and originated from the factory in Znojmo; Ditmar-Urbach products have commonly been found in Russia (Ian Macmillan, pers. com.). This sherd may thus be connected with the Military Academy. Provenance: trench 5. |
| 5   | Closed form. Fabric: as no. 3, soft and powdery. Surfaces: blue-and-black flower pattern sponge-stamped under clear glaze. No published parallels have been identified; indeed sponge-decorated wares are in general very little researched. The origins of sponge decoration lie in Scotland c. 1835, and the tradition disappeared in the 1930s (reappearing in the 1970s); production was located in many places, including Russia, India and South-east Asia (Kelly and Kowalsky 2001: 6, 11). Published examples from South-east Asia/India look somewhat, but not conclusively, similar in style to the Bala Hissar piece (Kelly and Kowalsky 2001: 113–40). Possible alternative origins might include potteries in Staffordshire, Scotland or even Holland, which specialised in sponged wares for export to the Far East (George Haggarty, pers. com.). Body sherd. Provenance: trench 7. Not drawn.   |
| 6   | Small flared bowl of probable <i>qingbai</i> ware. Surfaces: light green celadon-style glaze on interior and exterior. Although known from the tenth century, the earliest dateable <i>qingbai</i> export wares are from c. 1323, with production continuing until the last third of the fourteenth century (Pierson 2002: 17–22, 250). Diameter: 10 cm (5%). Provenance: trench 7. Drawing: BH07/54.   |
| 7   | Large bowl of <i>qingbai</i> ware. Surfaces: fine incised design on interior under clear glaze (very pale green where thickest); base ring is unglazed, slightly reddened. Dating as no. 6. Diameter (base): 8 cm (25%). Provenance: trench 6. Drawing: BH07/79.  |
| 8   | Closed form. Surfaces: coated in thick, glossy glaze that shows very pale green; lower edge on interior is unglazed. Exterior has motif in blurry blue underglaze painting. Wall thickness varies from 4 to 7 mm. Body sherd. Clearly of Far Eastern origin, but no close parallels found; probably early modern in date. Provenance: trench 2. Not drawn.  |
| 9   | Large, shallow bowl. Surfaces: greyish-blue floral design on interior and exterior under thick clear glaze. The grey tone indicates that this piece is either late Chinese, or possibly Thai or Vietnamese in origin (Ute Franke, pers. com.). The former is evidenced by parallels found in Hongzhi-period Ming porcelains from c. 1500; see Carswell 2000: fig. 144; figs. 145–47 exhibit similar decorative motifs, and further parallels can be found among the dishes from the cargo of the Lena Shoal junk, dated c. 1480–90 (Goddio <i>et al.</i> 2002: 12, 122–67). Diameter: 30 cm (3%). Provenance: trench 8. Drawing: BH07/63.   |

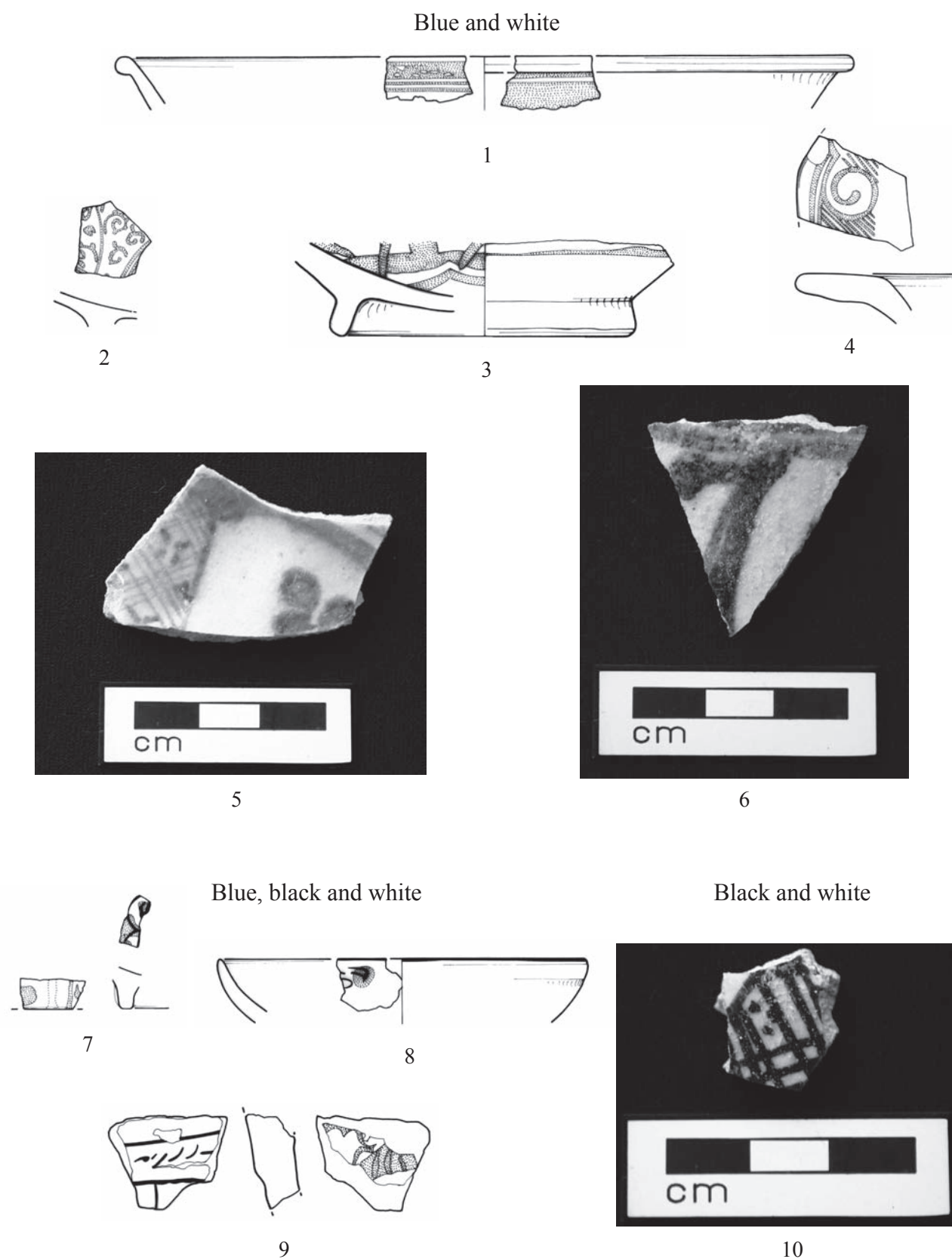


Fig. 11. Stone pastes from the Bala Hissar (scale: 50% unless otherwise indicated).



TABLE 3. Descriptions of pottery illustrated in Fig. 11.

| No. | Details  |
|-----|--|
| 1   | Flared bowl with rolled rim. Fabric: coarse-grained, crumbly, off-white stone paste. Surfaces: very blurred bright blue design on interior and exterior under clear glaze. Diameter: 26 cm (3%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/19.   |
| 2   | Thin-walled, shallow bowl with ring-foot. Fabric: medium-grained stone paste. Surfaces: neat blue interior design under clear glaze; glaze thicker on exterior and showing very pale green. Some motif parallels with Chinese wares (e.g. Fig. 10, no. 9); Fehérvári (1973: 139–40) notes that Iranian productions of Chinese-inspired blue-on-white appear from the sixteenth century, with intensification of production in the mid-seventeenth century due to a reduction in the supply from China. Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/20. |
| 3   | Large bowl with ring-foot. Surfaces: bright blue design under thick crackled clear glaze; exterior glaze is thinner, covering the underside of the base but not the interior of the foot-ring. Diameter (base): 11 cm (18%). Provenance: NSH. Drawing: BH07/88.  |
| 4   | Bowl with everted ledge-rim. Fabric: coarse, cream, fairly soft (proto-)stone paste. Surfaces: blue design under patchy, flaking clear glaze, patinated silver; surface of fabric shows yellowish where exposed. Diameter: uncertain. Provenance: general collection. Drawing: BH07/12.  |
| 5   | Bowl. Fabric: medium-grained. Surfaces: interior blue design under clear glaze of uneven thickness; exterior has a single blue spot, perhaps accidental, under clear glaze. Body sherd, wall thickness 3–5 mm. Provenance: trench 2. Not drawn; interior illustrated.  |
| 6   | Closed or neutral form. Fabric: coarse, proto-stone paste. Surfaces: exterior has thickly painted dark blue design; interior has two small blue smudges, probably accidental, all under clear glaze. Body sherd, wall thickness 5 mm. Provenance: trench 2. Not drawn; exterior illustrated.   |
| 7   | Thin-walled bowl. Fabric: fine-grained stone paste. Surfaces: carefully applied blue-and-black design inside and around outside of ring base, under thick lustrous clear glaze. Diameter: uncertain. Provenance: trench 8. Drawing: BH07/70.   |
| 8   | Small bowl. Surfaces: black design and rim band, with blue spot, under clear glaze. Diameter: 13 cm (5%). Provenance: NSH. Drawing: BH07/89.   |
| 9   | Thick-walled bowl. Fabric: fine-grained stone paste. Surfaces: black design on exterior, and blue design on interior, under clear glaze. Probable post-Safavid date (Ute Franke, pers. com.). Body sherd. Provenance: trench 8. Drawing: BH07/71.  |
| 10  | Open form. Fabric: coarse-grained stone paste. Surfaces: black design on interior and exterior, under clear glaze; interior has two diagonal lines. Body sherd. Provenance: trench 2. Not drawn; exterior illustrated.   |

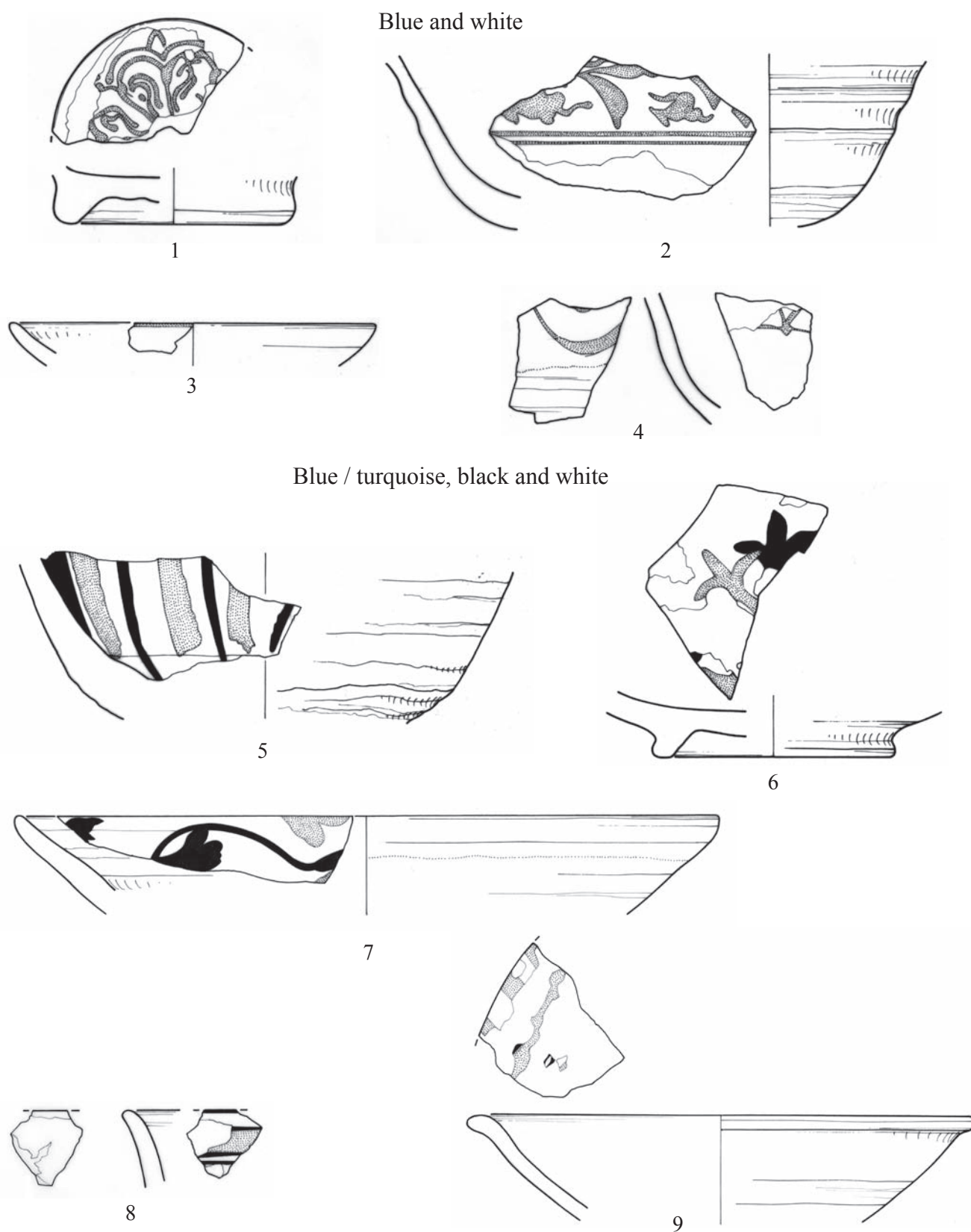


Fig. 12. Underglaze-painted earthenware (blue-on-white, blue- and black-on-white and blue-on-turquoise) from the Bala Hissar (scale: 50%).

TABLE 4. Descriptions of pottery illustrated in Fig. 12.

| No. | Details   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | Bowl with ring-base. Fabric: 2. Surfaces: unslipped body with interior dark blue pattern under clear glaze that shows dirty pale green over body; exterior and under base is unglazed. Diameter (base): 8.5 cm (35%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/1.  |
| 2   | Deep bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: blue interior design under flaking whitish glaze; uncoated exterior. Body sherd. Provenance: trench 8. Drawing: BH07/66.  |
| 3   | Flared bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: blue rim band under decomposing crackled white glaze on interior and exterior. Diameter: 13 cm (6%). Provenance: trench 6. Drawing: BH07/82.  |
| 4   | Bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: blue lines blurring to turquoise under white glaze on interior and upper exterior. The characteristic “bleeding” of this underglaze-painted blue-on-white may date this piece to the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries (Ute Franke, pers. com.). Body sherd. Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/5.   |
| 5   | Deep bowl. Fabric: 3. Surfaces: stripes of turquoise and black under/in white glaze; exterior is uncoated. The decoration of this piece resembles that of some examples of Russian-made ikat-inspired porcelains manufactured for the Central Asian market, but the Bala Hissar piece is clearly not of comparable quality; ikat ware dates from the second half of the nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth century (Rivers 2004). Body sherd. Provenance: NSH. Drawing: BH07/92. |
| 6   | Shallow bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: blue-and-black design under white glaze on interior; exterior uncoated. Diameter: 8.5 cm (25%). Provenance: trench 6. Drawing: BH07/81.  |
| 7   | Flared bowl. Fabric: 6. Surfaces: black-and-turquoise design under white glaze on interior; exterior glazed over rim only. Diameter: 25 cm (13%). Provenance: trench 8. Drawing: BH07/68.   |
| 8   | Bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: black-and-turquoise design under white glaze on interior; exterior glazed. This piece may be of sixteenth- to seventeenth-century date (Ute Franke, pers. com.). Diameter: <i>c.</i> 34 cm (1%). Provenance: trench 8. Drawing: BH07/69.   |
| 9   | Flared bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: bright blue-and-black interior design (mostly flaked off) on white slip under clear glaze; dotted lines on exterior indicate edge of slip (upper) and glaze (lower). Diameter: 18 cm (5%). Provenance: trench 1. Drawing: BH07/59.  |
| 10  | Open form. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: cobalt blue design under turquoise glaze on both interior and exterior. Body sherd. Provenance: trench 8. Drawing: BH07/67.   |
| 11  | Flared bowl. Fabric: 2. Surfaces: blue design under turquoise glaze on interior; exterior glazed. Diameter: 22 cm (4%). Provenance: trench 7. Drawing: BH07/55.   |

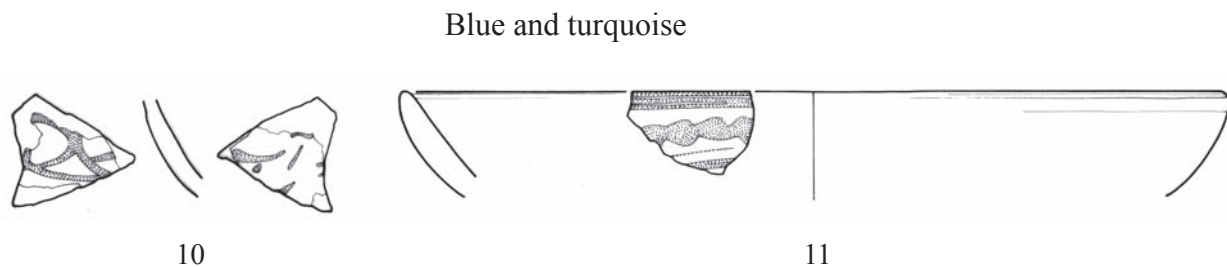


Fig. 12. (cont.)



pastes for thin-sectioning and therefore the robustness of these results. No attempt has been made here to assign the 17 stone paste sherds (of which 10 are illustrated) to particular production centres. High-quality stone paste wares could be widely distributed, but some of the stone paste (in some cases perhaps better termed proto-stone paste) fabrics from the Bala Hissar assemblage are thick-walled, porous, off-white, soft and crumbly, and the vessels may not have been very strong. Likewise, some of the decoration is exuberantly rather than carefully executed. It may thus be that some pieces have a local origin: a stone paste industry existed in mediaeval Afghanistan,<sup>68</sup> but stone paste wares are not known to be made anywhere in the country at present. At what date this technology died out is unknown; examples from the Bala Hissar assemblage are most likely to be early modern in date.

#### GLAZED EARTHENWARES (Tables 4–10, Figs. 12–18)

Unpicking which of the earthenwares from the Bala Hissar assemblage were produced in or close to Kabul, and which might have come from further afield, is a challenging proposition on the basis of our current knowledge. Certainly, fabric groups 1, 2, 3 and 6 must have been sourced in the wider Kabul region, since they were all used to make Istalif wares; likewise, they must have been in use in modern times, although that does not preclude earlier dates for other wares with those fabrics. Only future, larger-scale work will allow further clarification of these issues.

#### UNDERGLAZE-PAINTED WARES (Tables 4–5, Figs. 12–13)

The earthenware underglaze-painted pottery is in the same tradition as the stone paste examples; indeed, there is little to distinguish some of the coarse (proto-) stone paste wares from the current category in terms of finish, wall thickness, etc. The decorative schemes likewise overlap, with common finds of blue-on-white, sometimes with the addition of black (a less common variant is blue-on-turquoise); in a few cases, the blue is closer to turquoise than the more common cobalt hue (Table 4, Fig. 12). The second main decorative scheme is black-on-turquoise (see below; Table 5, Fig. 13). Fabric 1 is most commonly used, with 2, 3

and 6 also occurring (1: 11 sherds; 2: 2; 3: 3; and 6: 2; total: 18 sherds, of which 16 are illustrated). In terms of dating, the similarities between the blue-on-white earthenwares and the stone paste underglaze-painted wares may indicate an early modern date, which has been adopted here, but it is by no means impossible that some examples may be from a later period; clearly this tentative conclusion must be subject to revision as and when further data is available.

As noted above, a second common category of underglaze-painted wares is decorated in black (or occasionally blue) under turquoise (Table 5, Fig. 13). Coarse patterns have been painted under mediocre quality, poorly adhering turquoise glaze, which has often decomposed to a thin, matte coating (unlike the glaze of, for example, Istalif wares, which are superficially similar in appearance). These are probably a relatively recent production (Ute Franke, personal communication) and so have here been tentatively assigned a modern date. The tradition of turquoise-on-black pottery is a long one in the Islamic world, however: wares broadly answering this description are found in deposits of probable late mediaeval date at Shamshir Ghar, at sites in Seistan and at Bamiyan (dated thirteenth to fourteenth century).<sup>69</sup> A similar ware was also noted at the Bagh-e Babur, but its dating was not established (Ute Franke, personal communication). The published descriptions of these pieces are not detailed enough to clarify the closeness of their relationship with the Bala Hissar sherds.

#### ISTALIF WARE (Table 6, Fig. 14)

Still on sale today, the distinctive pottery made in Istalif village, some 40 km north of Kabul, is decorated with incised hatched and swirling lines under a turquoise lead glaze. Pottery production at Istalif may date back to the eighteenth century, or perhaps slightly earlier (the potters themselves consider their industry to be some 300 years old);<sup>70</sup> the sherds presented here have thus been assigned to the modern phase. How the wares may have changed through time is unknown. Istalif's history has swung between prosperity and destruction; the area is fertile and of considerable

<sup>68</sup> Watson 2004: 327. Barry, Michaud and Michaud (1996: 33, 35) describe potters pulverising and grinding quartz in Herat in the 1960s, but this was almost certainly associated with glaze production rather than the creation of stone paste fabrics.

<sup>69</sup> Dupree L. 1958: 193–94; Fairservis 1961: 42–43, fig. 10, pl. 14; Baker and Allchin 1991: 106, fig. 4.28, nos. 139–40 (Ware Group V, type 2).

<sup>70</sup> Gardin's Groupe D glazed wares (1959: 36, figs. 141–42), for example, to which he ascribes a Timurid date, have some similarities to the Istalif tradition. For the potters' oral traditions, see Wide 2008.

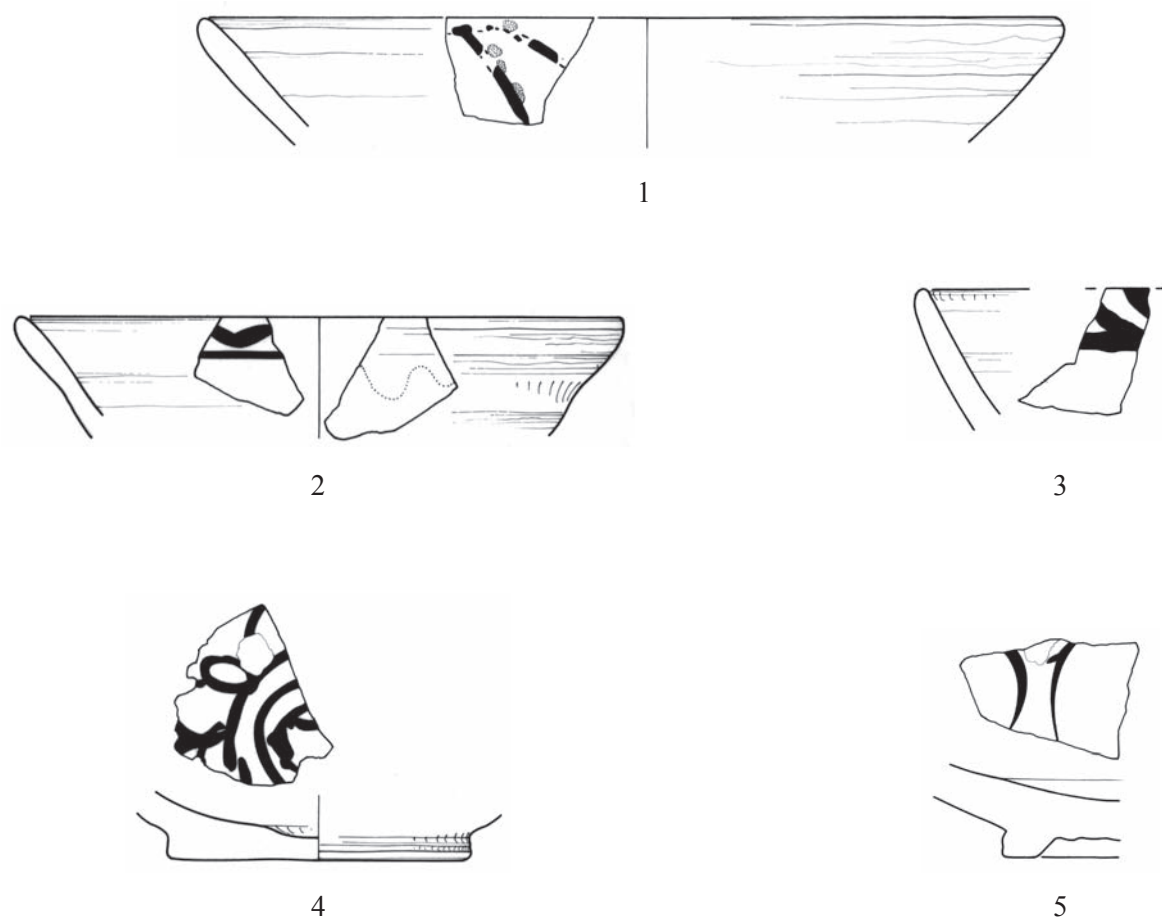
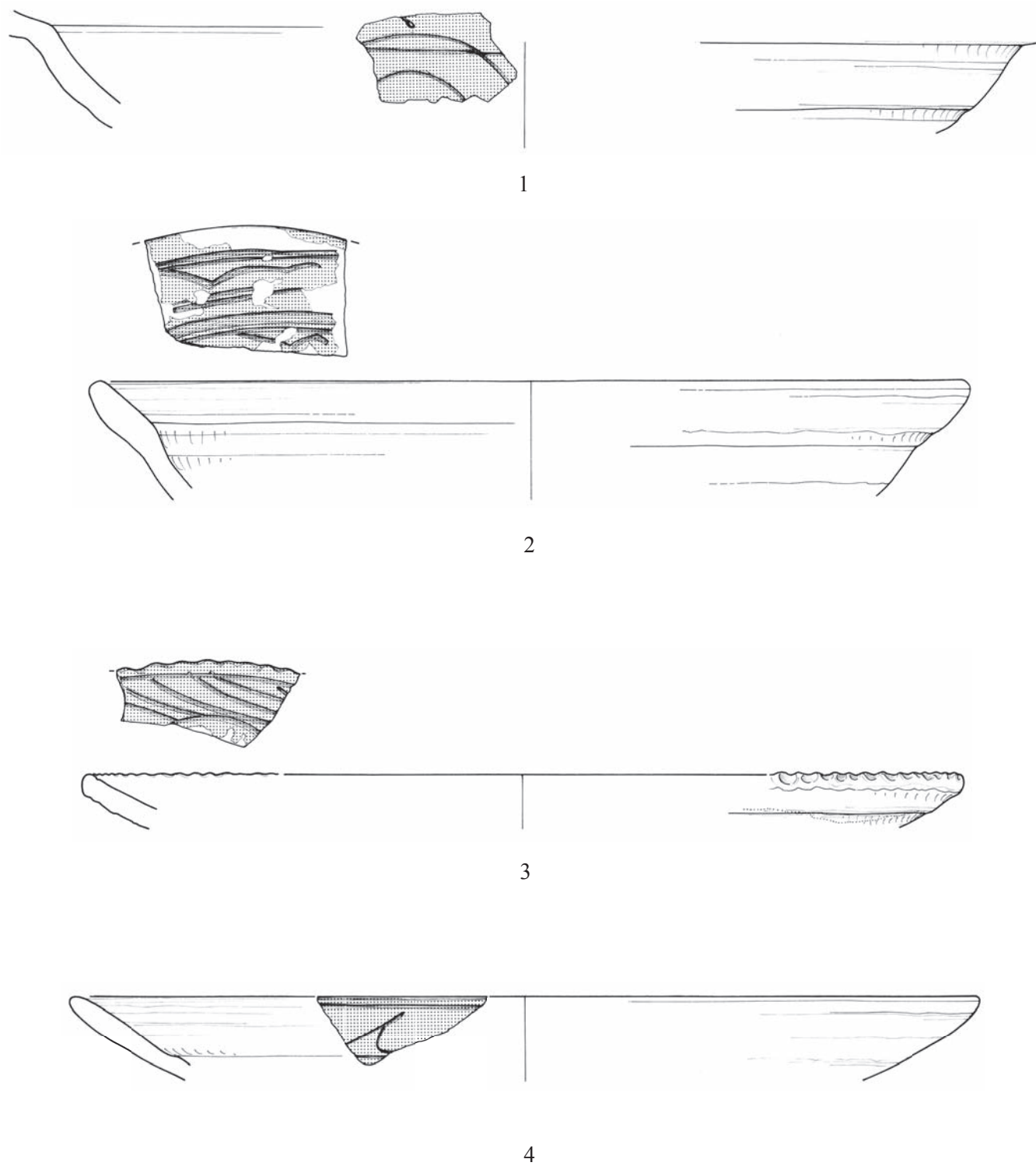


Fig. 13. Underglaze-painted earthenware (black-on-turquoise) from the Bala Hissar (scale: 50%).

TABLE 5. Descriptions of pottery illustrated in Fig. 13.

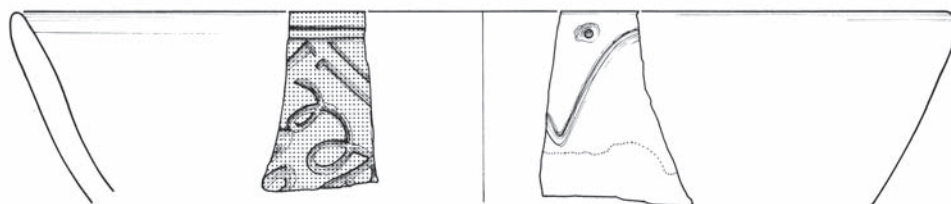
| No. | Details   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | Flared bowl. Fabric: 3. Surfaces: black design under flaking turquoise glaze on interior; exterior uncoated. Diameter: 24 cm (5%). Provenance: trench 8. Drawing: BH07/64.  |
| 2   | Flared bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: black design under turquoise glaze on interior; exterior glazed upper walls only (above dotted line) over thin white slip. Diameter: 16 cm (3%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/3.             |
| 3   | Bowl. Fabric: 3. Surfaces: brown-black painted design under turquoise glaze on interior; exterior glazed. Diameter: uncertain. Provenance: trench 8. Drawing: BH07/73.  |
| 4   | Flat-based bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: black design under turquoise glaze on interior; exterior uncoated. Diameter (base): 8 cm (24%). Provenance: NSH. Drawing: BH07/8.   |
| 5   | Bowl with low ring-base. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: black design under light turquoise glaze on interior; exterior and under base coated with dull decomposed glaze or surface residue. Diameter: uncertain. Provenance: trench 2. BH07/29. |



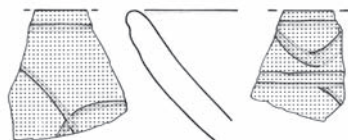
*Fig. 14. Istalif ware from the Bala Hissar (scale: 50%).*

TABLE 6. Descriptions of pottery illustrated in Fig. 14.

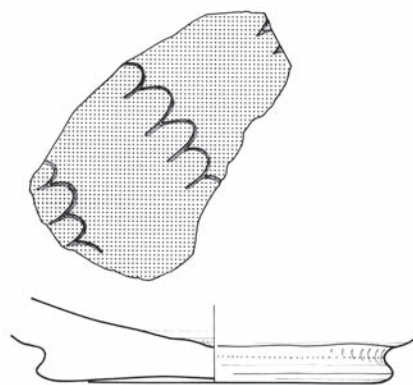
| No. | Details   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | Bowl with everted rim. Fabric: 2. Surfaces: incised design under turquoise glaze on interior; exterior uncoated, lower wall trimmed. Drawn at estimated diameter; body sherd. Provenance: NSH. Drawing: BH07/10.  |
| 2   | Bowl with everted rim. Fabric: 3. Surfaces: incised design under patchy greenish-turquoise glaze on interior; exterior uncoated. Diameter: 30 cm (7%). Provenance: trench 4. Drawing: BH07/53.  |
| 3   | Bowl with pie-crust rim. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: incised design under turquoise glaze on interior and over rim (edge marked by dotted line); exterior uncoated. Diameter: 30 cm (5%). Provenance: NSH. Drawing: BH07/09.   |
| 4   | Flared bowl. Fabric: 3. Surfaces: incised design under turquoise glaze on interior; thin glaze on exterior. Diameter: 31 cm (6%). Provenance: trench 8. Drawing: BH07/74.   |
| 5   | Deep bowl. Fabric: 3. Surfaces: incised design under patchy turquoise glaze on interior; thinner glaze over upper exterior only (edge marked with dotted line). Prominent spall on exterior near rim. Diameter: 25 cm (3%). Provenance: trench 8. Drawing: BH07/75. |
| 6   | Bowl. Fabric: 1, but coarser than the normal mixture. Surfaces: incised design under dull turquoise glaze on interior and exterior. Diameter uncertain. Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/31.   |
| 7   | Flat-based bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: incised loops under flaking turquoise glaze on interior; base unglazed, traces of dull, gritty glaze on exterior. Diameter: 9 cm (39%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/30.   |



5



6



7

Fig. 14. (cont.)



beauty, and has long attracted visitors. As well as agricultural products, the town was involved in textile production. British army officer Sir Charles MacGregor (1840–87) noted that, “A great part of the population of the town is of the weaver class, and quantities of coarse cloths ... are manufactured”.<sup>71</sup> There is no mention of ceramic production in his account, a situation that may reflect the greater economic importance attached to textile industries rather than a real absence of potting. Istalif was “totally destroyed” in 1842 by the British in revenge for local involvement in the killing of Alexander Burnes and the massacre of the garrison of Charikar,<sup>72</sup> and once again much damaged by the Taliban in the late 1990s. Since then, the town has seen growth and investment by cultural NGOs such as the Turquoise Mountain Foundation and others.

Istalifi vessels are not fired at a particularly high temperature, resulting in relatively thick-walled forms for strength, and the exteriors are often unglazed. The 21 pieces of this ware from the Bala Hissar, of which seven are illustrated, exhibit considerable variation in fabrics (fabric 1: 9 sherds; 2: 7; 3: 4; and 6: 1). Modern potters at Istalif reported to the author (AG) during a visit in 2006 that their traditional clay source ran out in recent times and that they had been forced to start mining their clay further away from the village. The different fabric groups may thus have chronological, as well as geological, significance but without stratified excavations this is impossible to clarify.

#### MONOCHROME GLAZED WARES

*(Incised) monochrome white-glazed ware* (Table 7, Fig. 15)

No parallel has been found for these pieces, only two of which were collected. The incised example in particular is coarsely potted and poorly finished. Given the absence of dated examples, taking into account fabric and finish, and superficial similarities with Istalif ware, the balance of probabilities seems to indicate that these should be assigned to the modern phase.

*Monochrome turquoise-glazed ware* (Table 8, Fig. 16)  
The recent date of monochrome turquoise-glazed wares is relatively securely established. These pots appear in pictures of the historic bazaar in the town of Tashkurgan (about 60 km east of Mazar-i Sharif), taken before its destruction in the 1980s. These images

featured in a photographic exhibition held in the Kabul Museum entitled *Tashkurgan: an Afghan urban heritage lost?*, where they were seen by the authors. Large turquoise-glazed bowls acted as water containers for the white doves of the Hazrat ‘Ali shrine in Mazar-i Sharif in 1963.<sup>73</sup> This is not to suggest that the Bala Hissar pieces were brought from Mazar or Tashkurgan; it is probable that such common wares were produced in many localities, including Kabul. Eleven sherds were collected, comprising three different fabrics (fabric 1: 5 sherds; 2: 4; and 3: 2); six of these are illustrated. The tradition may have had some longevity—similar vessels from the Helmand Valley were dated by Hammond to the Timurid period, for example—but it seems appropriate to attribute these wares to our modern phase.<sup>74</sup>

*Monochrome yellow-glazed ware* (Table 9, Fig. 17)

These vessels are in general thinner-walled and more carefully potted than the Istalif wares, and more even than the monochrome turquoise-glazed wares. Twelve sherds were collected, all of which are of fabric 1, with a slightly redder firing colour than is standard for this clay mix; they have a bright yellow glaze over a cream slip. This uniformity may indicate a single production centre for this ware. Again, direct parallels are difficult to identify. Examples from the Bagh-e Babur excavations are dated from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, but these lack the white slip and are more mustardy in tone. Examples from Bamiyan were not dated by the excavators, nor is sufficient detail given on slipping patterns. An eighteenth- to nineteenth-century date might be a possibility.<sup>75</sup>

*Monochrome green-glazed ware* (Table 10, Fig. 18)

Nine sherds of this ware were recovered, all of fabric 1, of which four are illustrated here. In form and finish, these green-glazed vessels resemble the monochrome yellow ware described above (with the caveat that the glaze adheres slightly less well to the body), being characterised by a bright green glaze over a cream slip, inside and outside. It has been suggested that the green wares may slightly predate the yellow ones, but in light of the cohesiveness of the monochrome glazed wares generally, it seems unlikely that this would be

<sup>73</sup> Barry, Michaud and Michaud 1996: 58–59.

<sup>74</sup> Hammond 1970: 453.

<sup>75</sup> Baker and Allchin 1991: p. 106, fig. 4.28, no. 152, Ware Group V, type 8; Ute Franke, pers. com.

<sup>71</sup> MacGregor 1871: 392–93, quote on p. 393.

<sup>72</sup> MacGregor 1871: 393.

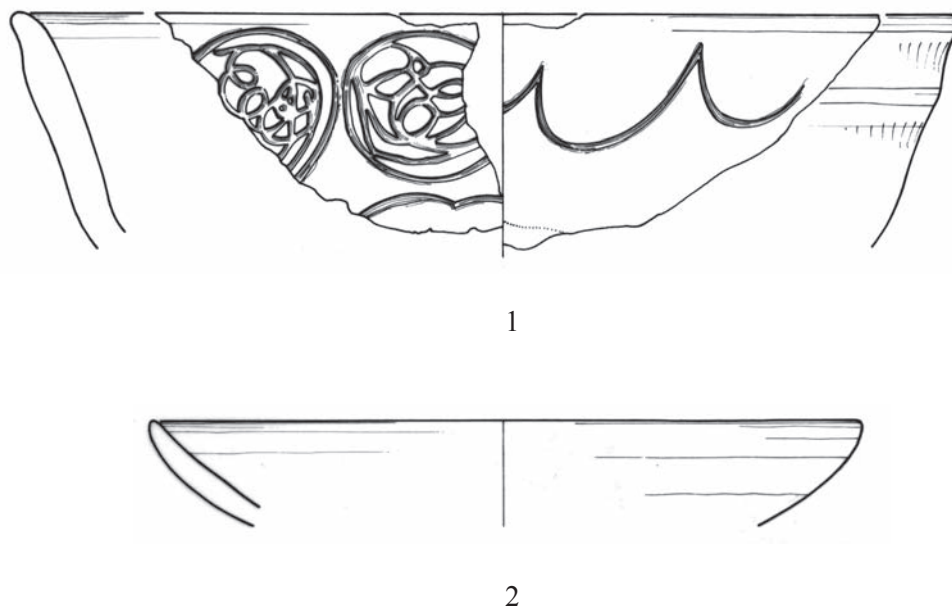
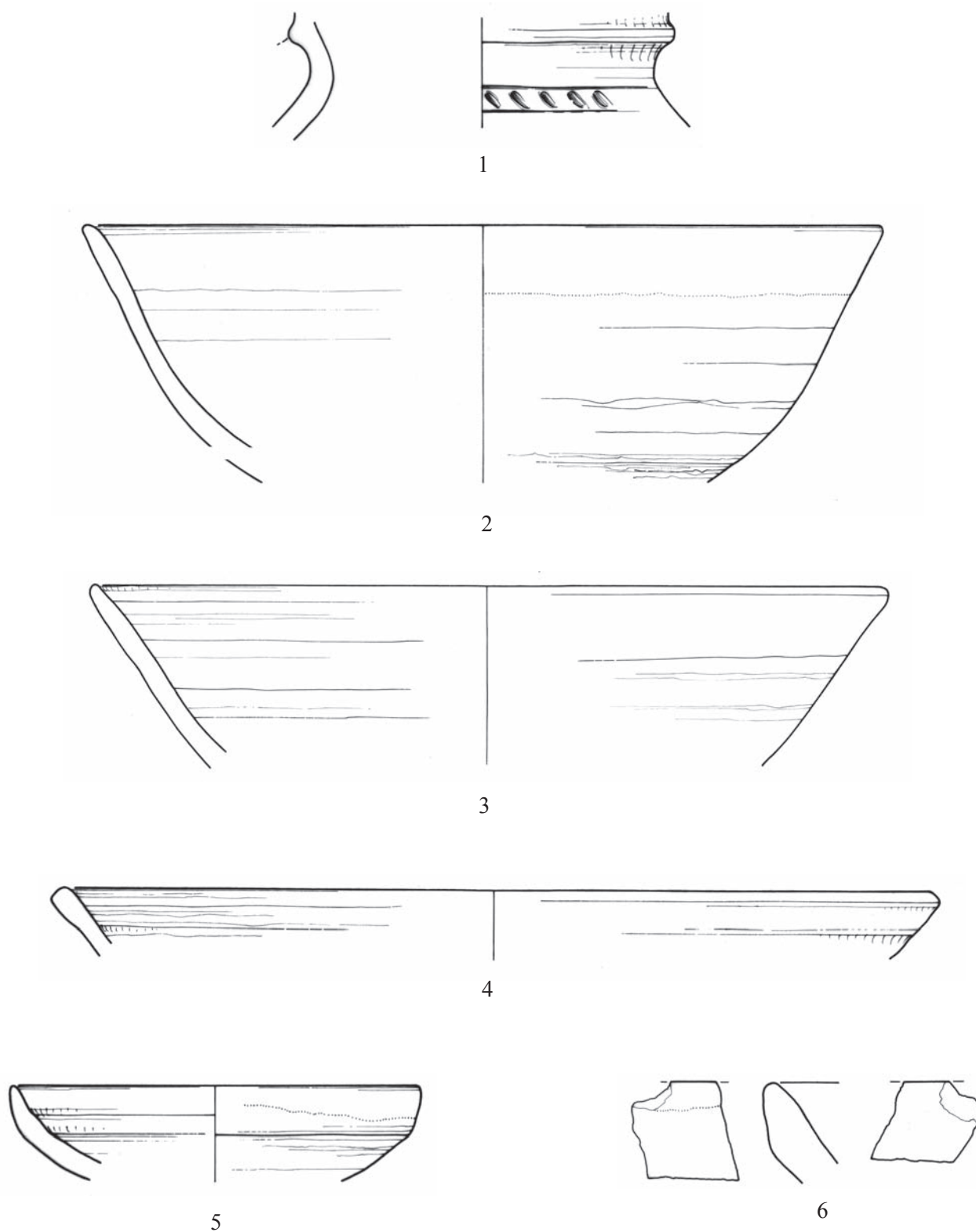


Fig. 15. (Incised) monochrome white-glazed ware from the Bala Hissar (scale: 50%).

TABLE 7. Descriptions of pottery illustrated in Fig. 15.

| No. | Details  |
|-----|--|
| 1   | Thick-walled bowl. Fabric: 5. Surfaces: thickly incised roundel design coated in thick off-white glaze, tending to pale green where thickest and poorly adhering to body; exterior has off-white glaze on the upper walls only (edge marked with dotted line). Diameter: 25 cm (10%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/4. |
| 2   | Shallow bowl. Fabric 1. Surfaces: thin, rather poor-quality white glaze on interior and exterior, thinner at rim, and on lower exterior. Diameter: 19 cm (5%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/21.   |

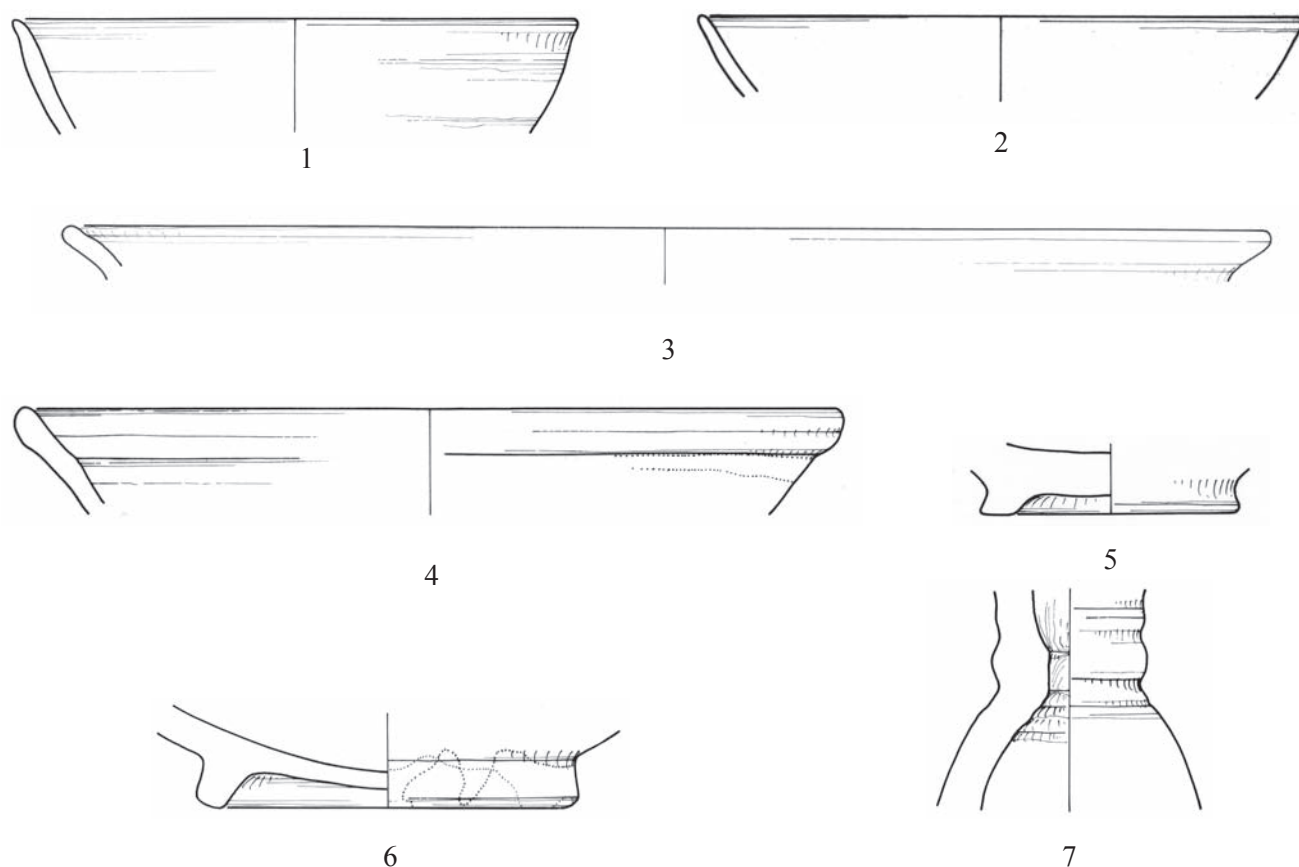


*Fig. 16. Monochrome turquoise-glazed ware from the Bala Hissar (scale: 50%).*

TABLE 8. Descriptions of pottery illustrated in Fig. 16.

| No. | Details  |
|-----|--|
| 1   | Jar or vase, with handle scar. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: thick turquoise glaze on interior and exterior; horizontal incised lines and band of rouletting on neck. Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/34. |
| 2   | Deep bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: light turquoise glaze on interior and upper exterior (edge marked by dotted line). Diameter: 27 cm (11%). Provenance: NSH. Drawing: BH07/87.                         |
| 3   | Deep bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: poorly adhering light turquoise glaze on interior and upper exterior. Diameter: 27 cm (5%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/32.                                  |
| 4   | Bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: very thin turquoise glaze on interior; exterior uncoated. Diameter: 30 cm (4%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/33.   |
| 5   | Bowl. Fabric: 3. Surfaces: decomposed turquoise glaze on interior and over rim (edge marked by dotted line). Diameter: 14 cm (4%). Provenance: trench 8. Drawing: BH07/65.                           |
| 6   | Thick-walled bowl. Fabric: 2. Surfaces: turquoise glaze on interior and over rim (edge marked by dotted line). Diameter: 44 cm (2%) approx. Provenance: trench 8. Drawing: BH07/72.                  |

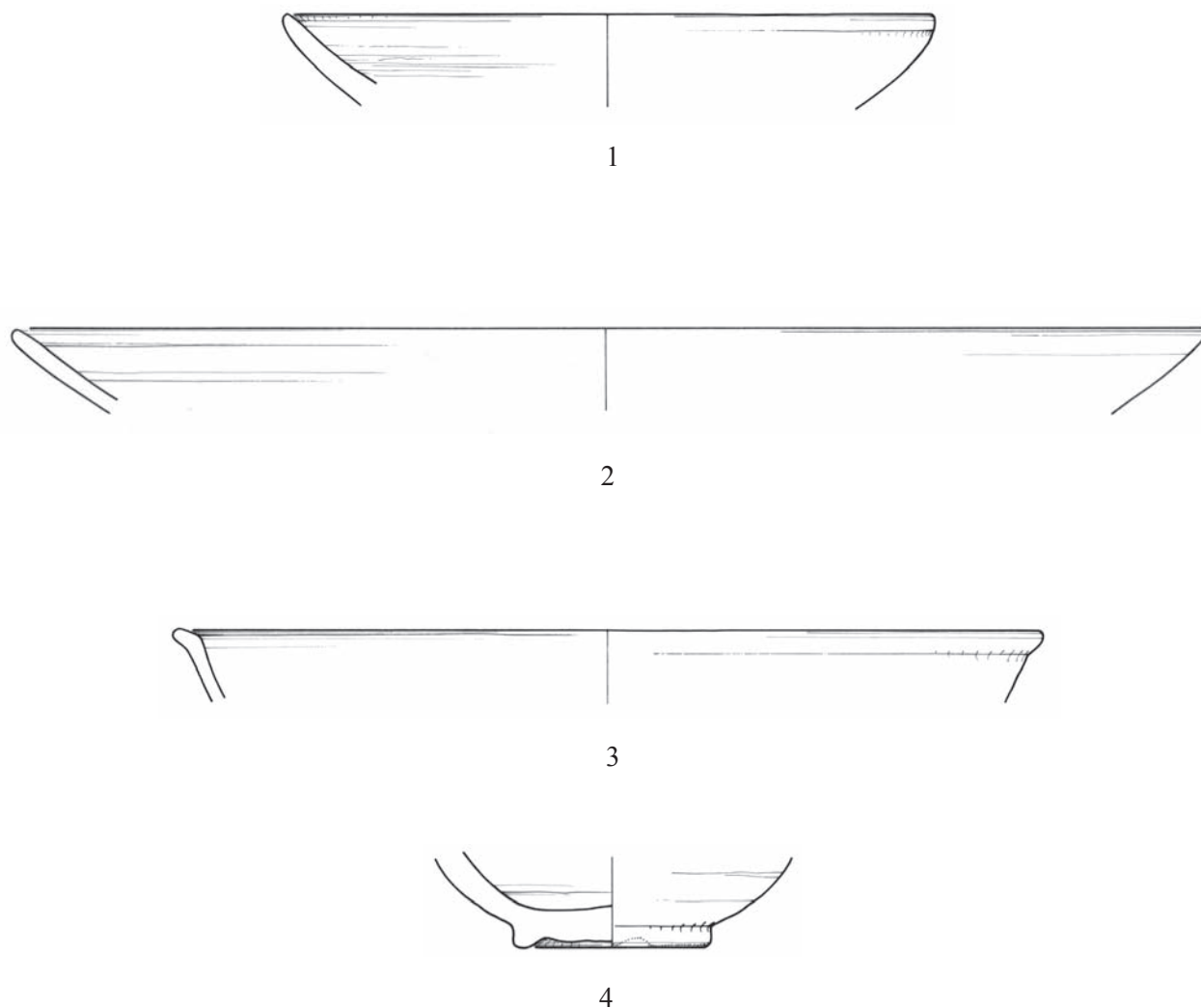




*Fig. 17. Monochrome yellow-glazed ware from the Bala Hissar (scale: 50%).*

TABLE 9. Descriptions of pottery illustrated in Fig. 17.

| No. | Details  |
|-----|--|
| 1   | Bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: thin layer of good-quality bright yellow glaze with slightly mustard tint especially at rim, over cream slip, coating interior and exterior. Diameter: 15 cm (9%). Provenance: NSH. Drawing: BH07/7.  |
| 2   | Bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: bright yellow glaze over cream slip on interior and (thinner) on exterior. Diameter: 16 cm (3%). Provenance: NSH. Drawing: BH07/91.   |
| 3   | Large, thin-walled bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: bright yellow glaze, probably over cream slip, on interior and exterior. Diameter: 32 cm (3%). Provenance: NSH. Drawing: BH07/90.  |
| 4   | Bowl with slightly everted rim. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: thin layer of good-quality yellow glaze over cream slip, coating interior and upper exterior (edges marked with dotted lines, slip above glaze). Diameter: 22 cm (6%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/22.                                |
| 5   | Bowl with low ring-foot. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: yellow glaze over cream slip on interior and exterior; underside of base unglazed but with drips of slip. Diameter (base): 7 cm (100%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/24.  |
| 6   | Bowl with ring-foot. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: bright yellow glaze over cream slip on interior and exterior; underside of base uncoated. Diameter (base): 10 cm (27%). Provenance: trench 6. Drawing: BH07/80.  |
| 7   | Small jar. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: yellow glaze over cream slip on exterior only; in patches the slip does not mask the darker clay of the body, especially in wheel striations. Pull marks are visible in the interior of neck. Drawn at estimated diameter. Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/23. |



*Fig. 18. Monochrome green-glazed ware from the Bala Hissar (scale: 50%).*

TABLE 10. Descriptions of pottery illustrated in Fig. 18.

| No. | Details   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | Bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: bright green glaze over cream slip, interior and exterior. Diameter: 18 cm (13%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/25.                            |
| 2   | Large bowl. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: bright green glaze over cream slip, interior and exterior. Diameter: 33 cm (4%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/26.                       |
| 3   | Bowl with slightly everted rim. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: bright green glaze over cream slip, interior and exterior. Diameter: 24 cm (4%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/27.   |
| 4   | Bowl with low ring-base. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: bright green glaze over cream slip, interior and exterior. Diameter (base): 5.5 cm (45%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/28. |

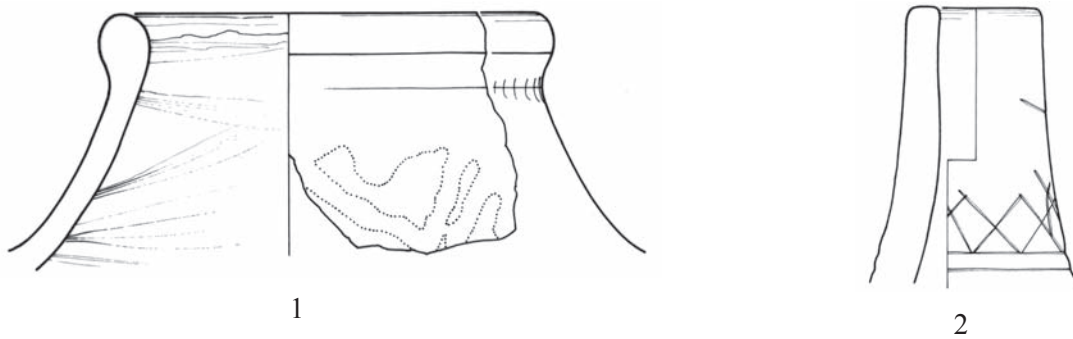


Fig. 19. Contemporary coarse wares from the Bala Hissar (scale: 50% unless otherwise indicated).

TABLE 11. Descriptions of pottery illustrated in Fig. 19.

| No. | Details   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | Handmade jar. Fabric: 4. Surfaces: dull brown slip over rim, with dribbles over exterior wall. Diameter: 12 cm (15%). Provenance: general collection. Drawing: BH07/15.   |
| 2   | Handmade, long-necked jar or flask. Fabric: 5. Surfaces: uncoated; incised design on exterior. Diameter: 3.5 cm (100%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/48.   |
| 3   | Large bowl with everted ledge-rim. Fabric: 5. Surfaces: uncoated; lightly incised wave motif on top of rim. Diameter: 44 cm (8%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/44. Scale: 1:3.   |
| 4   | Basin. Fabric: 2. Surfaces: band of red slip on top of rim; incised wave motif and small, modelled, indented transverse lug on exterior. Diameter: 44 cm (5%). Provenance: NSH. Drawing: BH07/96. Scale 1:3.  |
| 5   | Flowerpot. Fabric: 4. Surfaces: uncoated. Diameter: 18 cm (7%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/45.   |
| 6   | Jar. Fabric: 5. Surfaces: uncoated; band of carved indents around base. Diameter (base): 13 cm (38%). Provenance: trench 7. Drawing: BH07/56.   |
| 7   | Large jar. Fabric: does not conform closely to any of the defined groups. Chocolate brown, fine-grained fabric with abundant grey sand, coarse black sub-angular lithic fragments, moderate medium quartz, moderate coarse light brown lithic fragments and a little mica. Surfaces: red slip on exterior only; band of impressed decoration around exterior of rim, and series of incised vertical lines over top of rim. Diameter: 26 cm (13%). Provenance: trench 8. Drawing: BH07/76. |

by any significant margin.<sup>76</sup> It is not impossible that the green-glazed examples might be part of a tradition that started towards the end of our early modern phase, but in the absence of any explicit evidence for this earlier dating they have been assigned a modern date.

#### UNGLAZED WARES

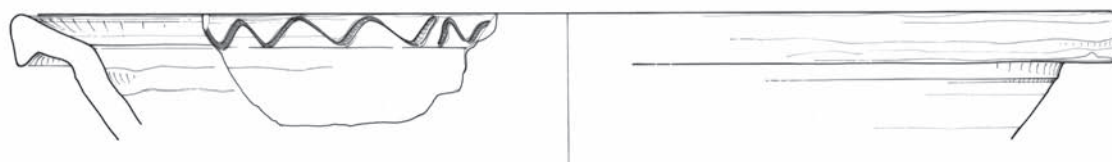
The limitations of available comparative data are as problematic, if not more so, for unglazed coarse wares as we have seen it to be for glazed vessels. The coarse wares collected from the Bala Hissar have thus been subdivided somewhat more broadly than the glazes, into cohesive wares where possible (e.g. the splashed

red slip ware), and otherwise, by period. It should be emphasised that the dating, assigned on the basis of similarity to published examples, in addition to general appearance, form and surface finish, remains tentative. The breakdown provided below is an initial basis for ongoing discussion, rather than a definitive statement of fact.

#### *Contemporary coarsewares* (Table 11, Fig. 19)

Among the coarse wares collected at the Bala Hissar were types identified by our Afghan colleagues as contemporary, i.e. of which examples could be found in Kabul's markets in living memory. This group includes both handmade wares (nos. 1–2; handmade vessels were not common in the assemblage, comprising only five sherds in total) and wheel-made pieces (nos. 3–7).

<sup>76</sup> Ute Franke, pers. com. As with the yellow-glazed wares, apparently similar examples from the Bagh-e Babur have been dated to a much earlier period, the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, but the Bala Hissar wares do not seem to be an exact parallel to these.



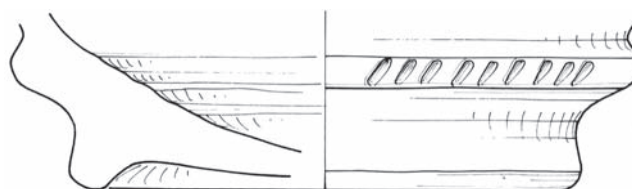
3 (1:3)



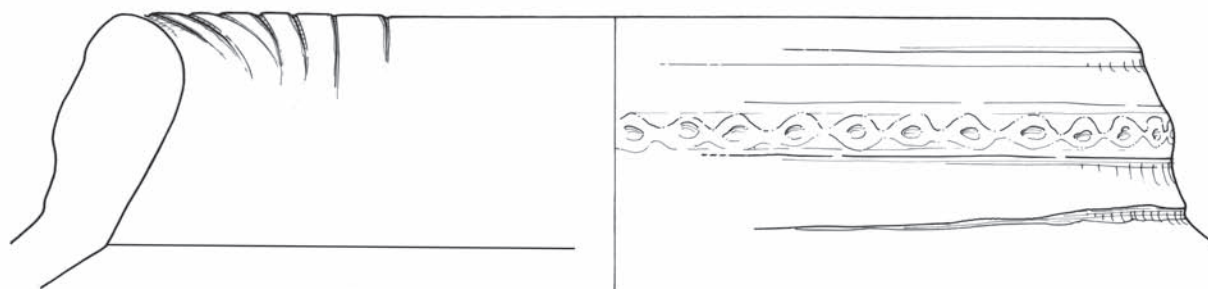
4 (1:3)



5



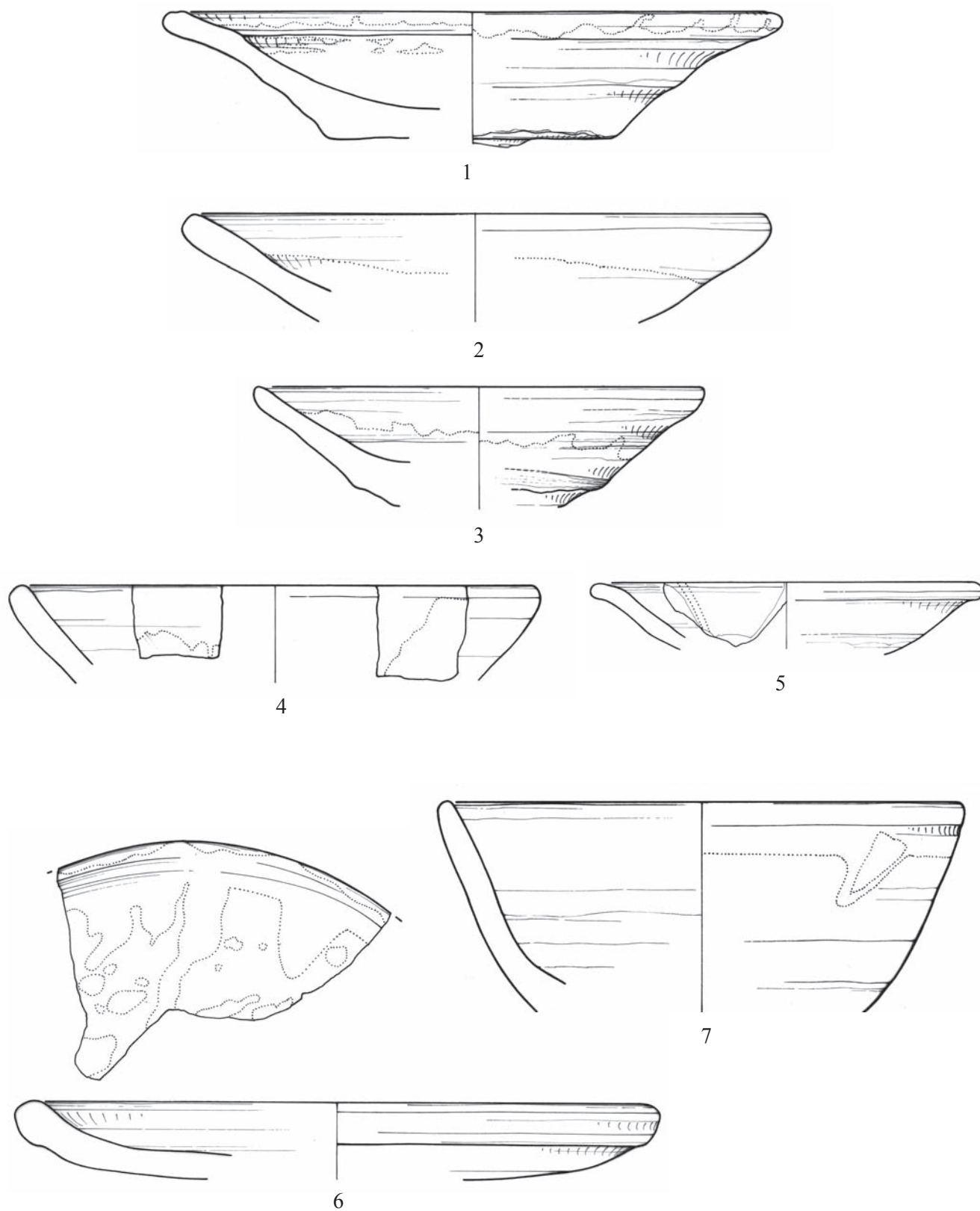
6



7

Fig. 19. (cont.)

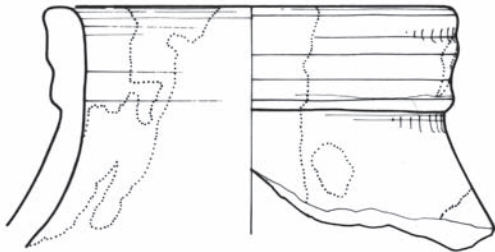




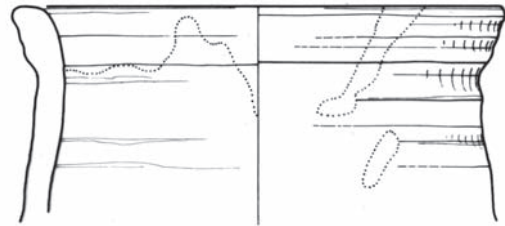
*Fig. 20. Splashed red slip ware from the Bala Hissar (scale: 50%).*

TABLE 12. Descriptions of pottery illustrated in Fig. 20.

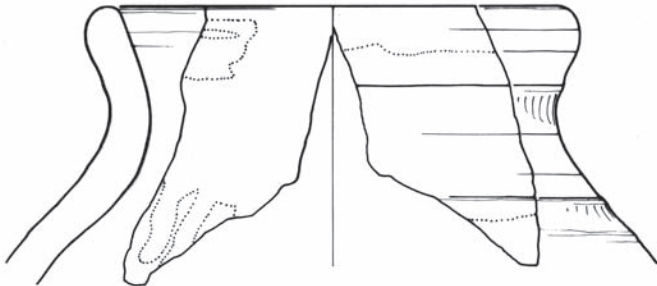
| No. | Details  |
|-----|--|
| 1   | Shallow bowl, thrown off the hump with a string-cut base. Fabric: 4. Surfaces: watery rim band of red slip; interior smoothed. Diameter: 22 cm (10%). Provenance: trench 8. Drawing: BH07/78.                          |
| 2   | Shallow bowl. Fabric: 4. Surfaces: wide band of red slip over rim. Diameter: 21 cm (9%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/38.   |
| 3   | Shallow bowl (thrown as 1 above). Fabric: 4. Surfaces: watery band of red slip over rim and onto upper walls of interior and exterior. Diameter: 16 cm (15%). Provenance: general collection. Drawing: BH07/11.        |
| 4   | Bowl. Fabric: 4. Surfaces: wide band of red slip over interior of rim; thick dribbles down exterior. Diameter: 19 cm (5%). Provenance: trench 1. Drawing: BH07/57.   |
| 5   | Shallow bowl. Fabric: 4. Surfaces: drips of red slip over rim and interior. Diameter: 14 cm (10%). Provenance: trench 5. Drawing: BH07/52.   |
| 6   | Shallow bowl or plate. Fabric: 1. Surfaces: red slip splashed on rim and over interior; lower exterior walls roughly finished. Diameter: 23 cm (17%). Provenance: trench 6. Drawing: BH07/83.                          |
| 7   | Deep bowl. Fabric: 4. Surfaces: interior entirely coated in red slip, as is exterior of rim, with dribbles. Diameter: 19 cm (5%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/36.  |
| 8   | Jar with thickened rim; form has some resemblance to those in the Ghazni photograph (see n. 77). Fabric: 2. Surfaces: splashed red slip in dribbles over rim. Diameter: 11 cm (9%). Provenance: NSH. Drawing: BH07/95. |
| 9   | Jar with slightly thickened rim. Fabric: 4. Surfaces: splashed red slip on rim, and dripping down exterior. Diameter: 13cm (20%). Provenance: trench 6. Drawing: BH07/84.  |
| 10  | Jar. Fabric: 5. Surfaces: red slip splashed over rim, dribbling into interior; edge of band of slip on shoulder preserved on lower exterior of sherd. Diameter: 13 cm (10%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/35.   |
| 11  | Small jar. Fabric: 4. Surfaces: watery red slip on exterior and over rim, dripping into interior. Diameter: 6.5 cm (36%). Provenance: general collection. Drawing: BH07/13.  |



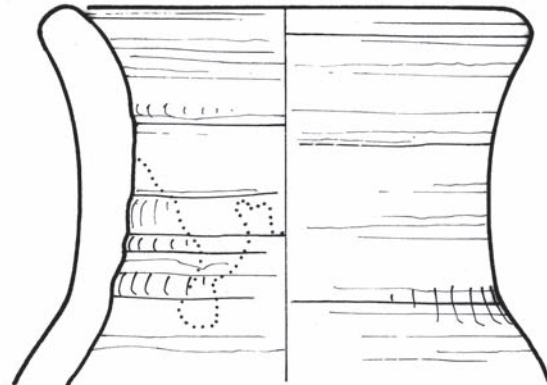
8



9

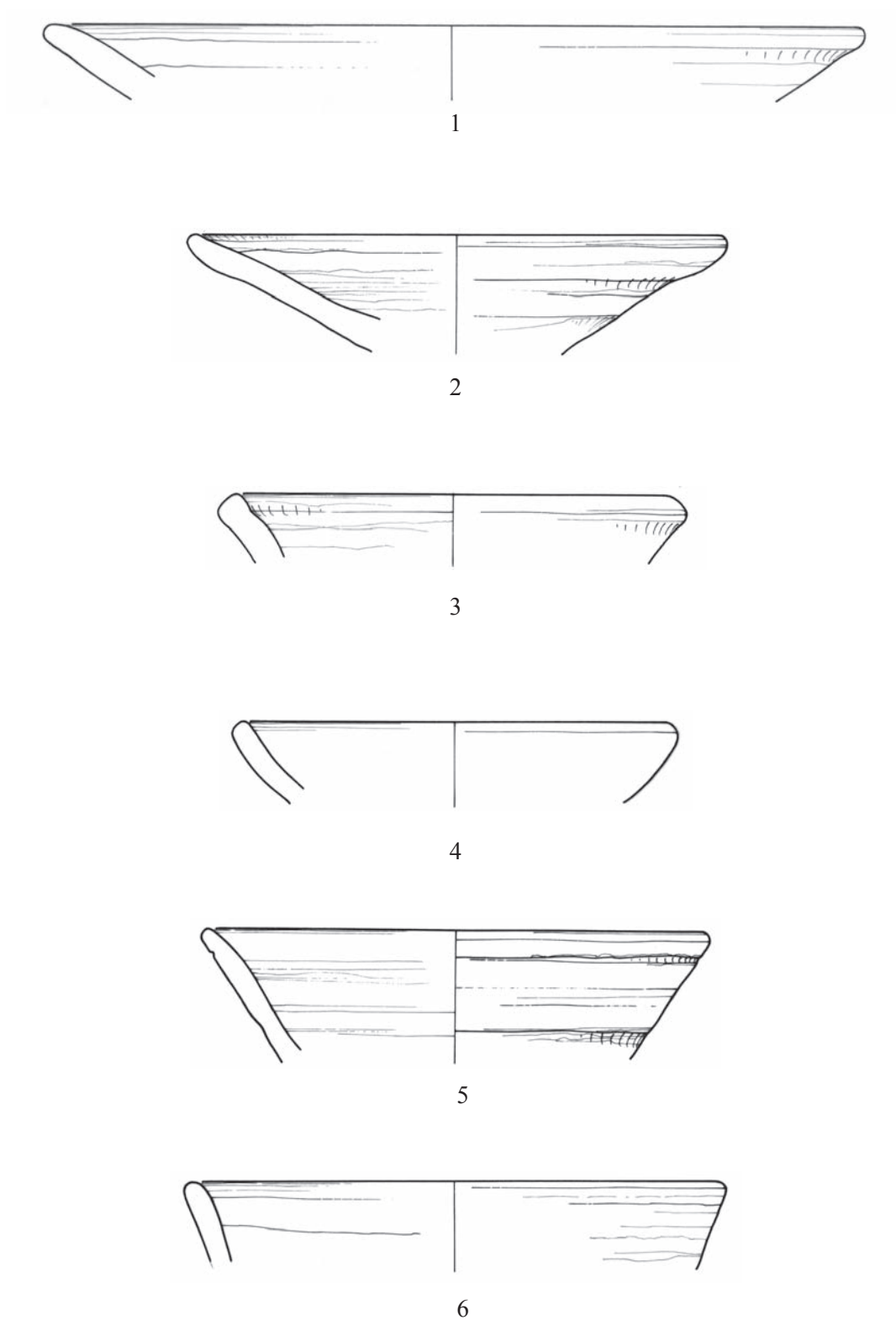


10



11

Fig. 20. (cont.)



*Fig. 21. Early modern coarse wares from the Bala Hissar (scale: 50%).*

TABLE 13. Descriptions of pottery illustrated in Fig. 21.

| No. | Details   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | Flared bowl. Fabric: 4. Surfaces: interior red slip with drip over rim. Diameter: 26 cm (6%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/37.   |
| 2   | Flared bowl, formally not unlike some of the splashed red slip wares. Fabric: 3. Surfaces: uncoated. Diameter: 17 cm (12%). Provenance: trench 1. Drawing: BH07/62.                           |
| 3   | Bowl. Fabric: 6. Surfaces: uneven dark red slip on interior only; exterior scorched. Diameter: 14 cm (8%). Provenance: trench 8. Drawing: BH07/77.  |
| 4   | Bowl. Fabric: 5. Surfaces: uncoated. Diameter: 14 cm (10%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/47.   |
| 5   | Bowl with groove just below exterior of rim. Fabric: 4. Surfaces: wipe marks on walls; surfaces scorched. Diameter: 16 cm (11%). Provenance: NSH. Drawing: BH07/94.                           |
| 6   | Deep bowl. Fabric: 4. Surfaces: red slip on interior only. Diameter: 17 cm (7%). Provenance: trench 1. Drawing: BH07/61.  |
| 7   | Large bowl or basin with preserved edge of lug handle. Fabric: 2. Surfaces: good dark red slip on interior and upper exterior. Diameter: 36 cm (5%). Provenance: trench 6. Drawing: BH07/85.  |
| 8   | Deep bowl or cooking pot with externally thickened rim. Fabric: 3. Surfaces: red slip on interior and exterior. Diameter: <i>c.</i> 32 cm (5%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/50.       |
| 9   | Button base similar to that of the <i>qadus</i> or water-wheel jar. Fabric: sandy 5. Surfaces: traces of red slip on exterior. Diameter: 4 cm (100%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/49. |

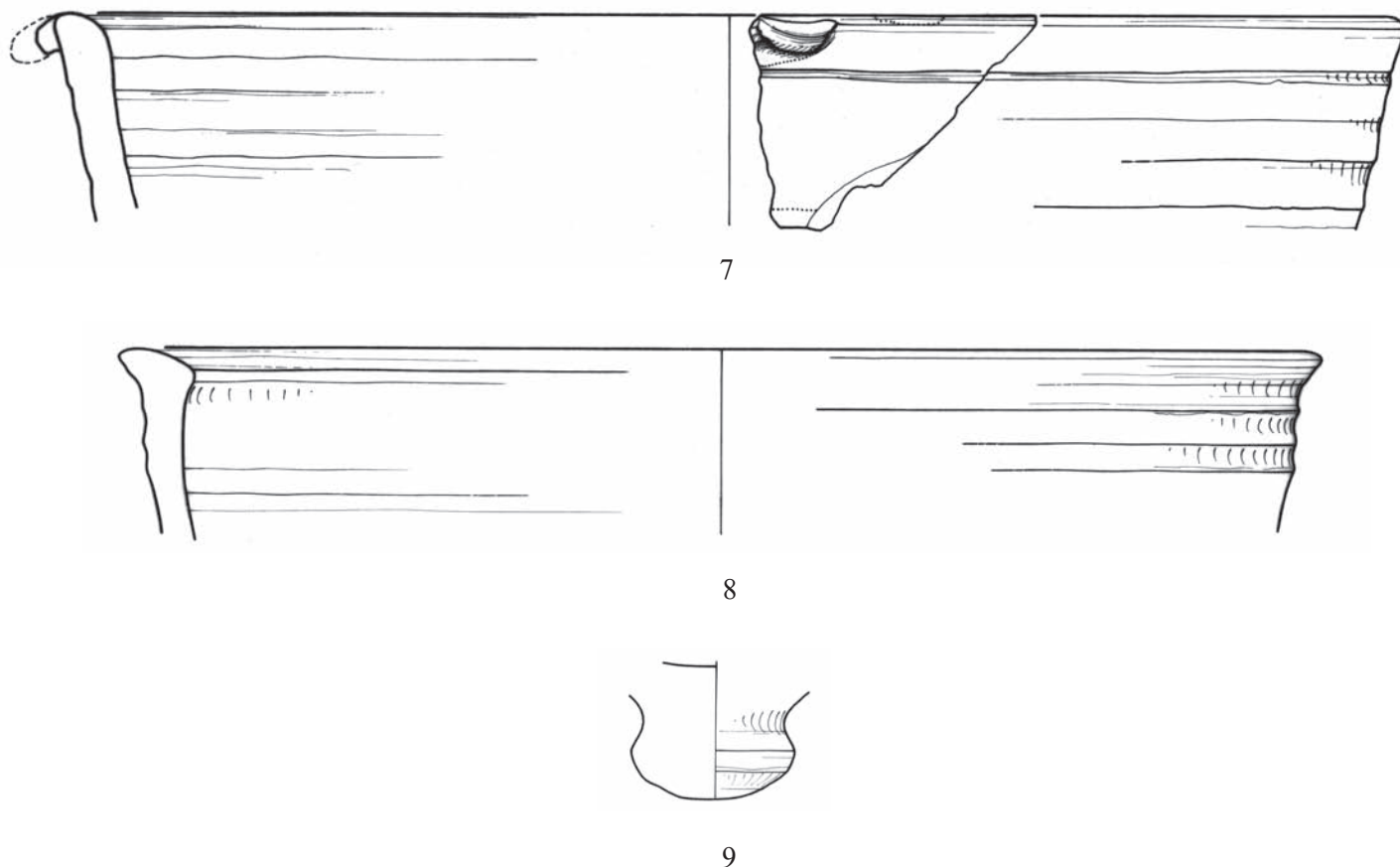
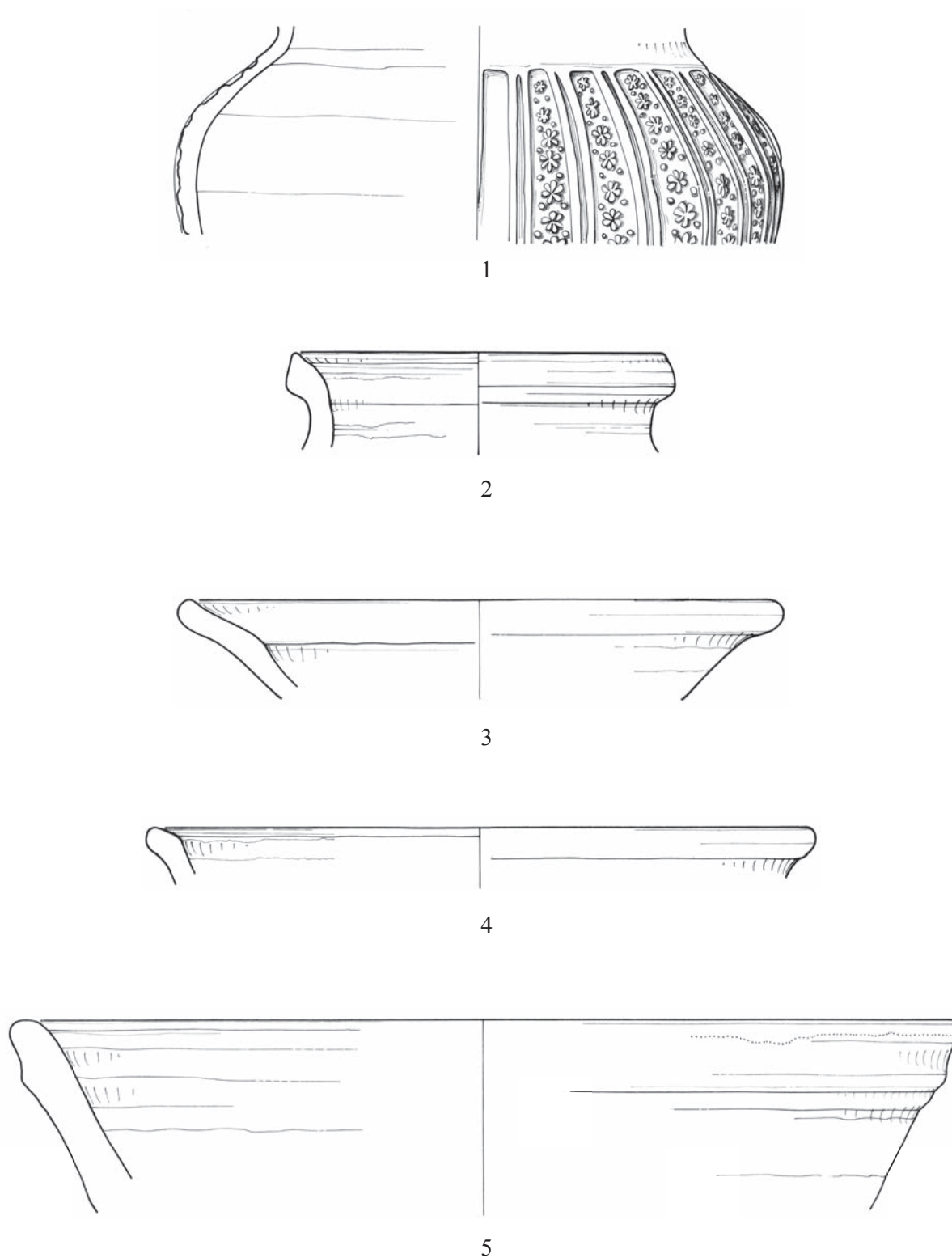


Fig. 21. (cont.)





*Fig. 22. Mediaeval coarse wares from the Bala Hissar (scale: 50%).*

TABLE 14. Descriptions of pottery illustrated in Fig. 22.

| No. | Details   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | Moulded water jug. Fabric: variation of 2; fine beige matrix with moderate medium quartz/sand, a few medium grog pieces, and scarce fine voids (similar to fabric WF4 from the site of Jam, but a little coarser; Gascoigne and Bridgman 2010: table 2). Surfaces: uncoated; elaborate moulded decoration in vertical bands on exterior, and finger smears on interior. This ware is usually dated from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, although some pieces may be earlier (Gascoigne and Bridgman 2010: 124–25). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/6. |
| 2   | Jar with slightly everted rim. Fabric: 4. Surfaces: wide band of red slip/wash over rim. Diameter: 13 cm (10%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/41.   |
| 3   | Bowl with everted rim. Fabric: 5. Surfaces: faint traces of red slip on top of rim only. Paralleled by example dated to the early Islamic period (Baker and Allchin 1991: 120–21, fig. 4.4, no. 32). Diameter: 20 cm (12%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/46.   |
| 4   | Bowl or cooking pot. Fabric: 3. Surfaces: interior uncoated; exterior scorched but traces of red slip are visible at rim. Diameter: 22 cm (7%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/51.   |
| 5   | Large bowl. Fabric: 5. Surfaces: red slip inside and just over rim. Diameter: 31 cm (8%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/40.   |
| 6   | Flowerpot? Fabric: 5. Surfaces: orange-red slip on interior and on top of rim; incised/combed patches on exterior of rim. Suggested to be pre-Mughal flowerpot type (Ute Franke, pers. com.); paralleled by example with open base, dated to mediaeval times prior to the Mongol conquest (Baker and Allchin 1991: fig. 4.2, no. 18). Diameter: 34 cm (10%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/39.  |
| 7   | Thin-walled jar or cooking pot with strongly everted rim. Fabric: 5. Surfaces: red slip inside and out. Paralleled by example from the mediaeval period, dated up to the Mongol conquest (Baker and Allchin 1991: fig. 4.9, no. 63). Diameter: 31 cm (6%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/2.   |

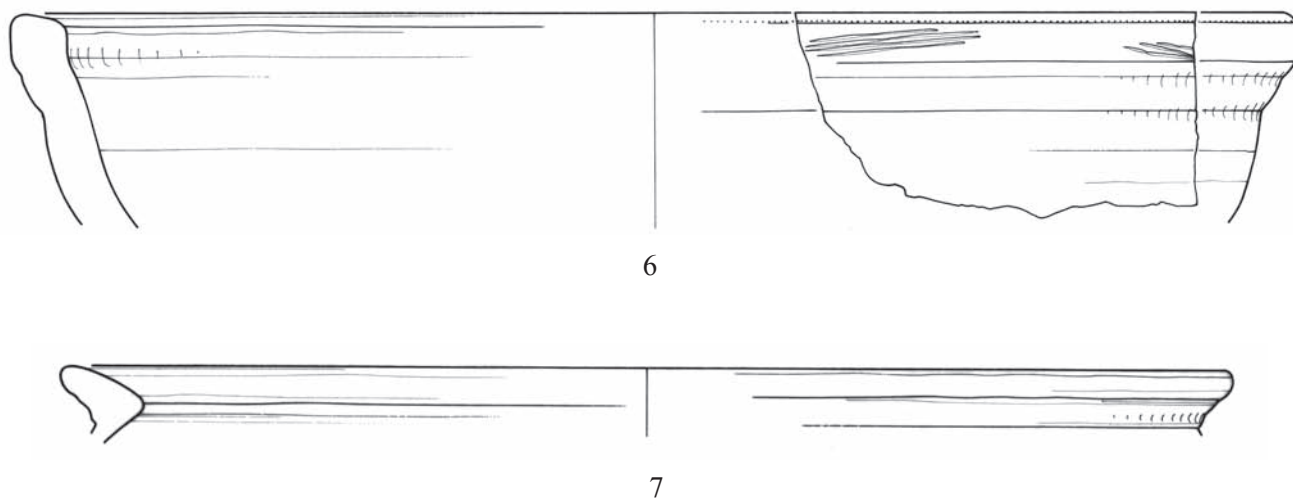
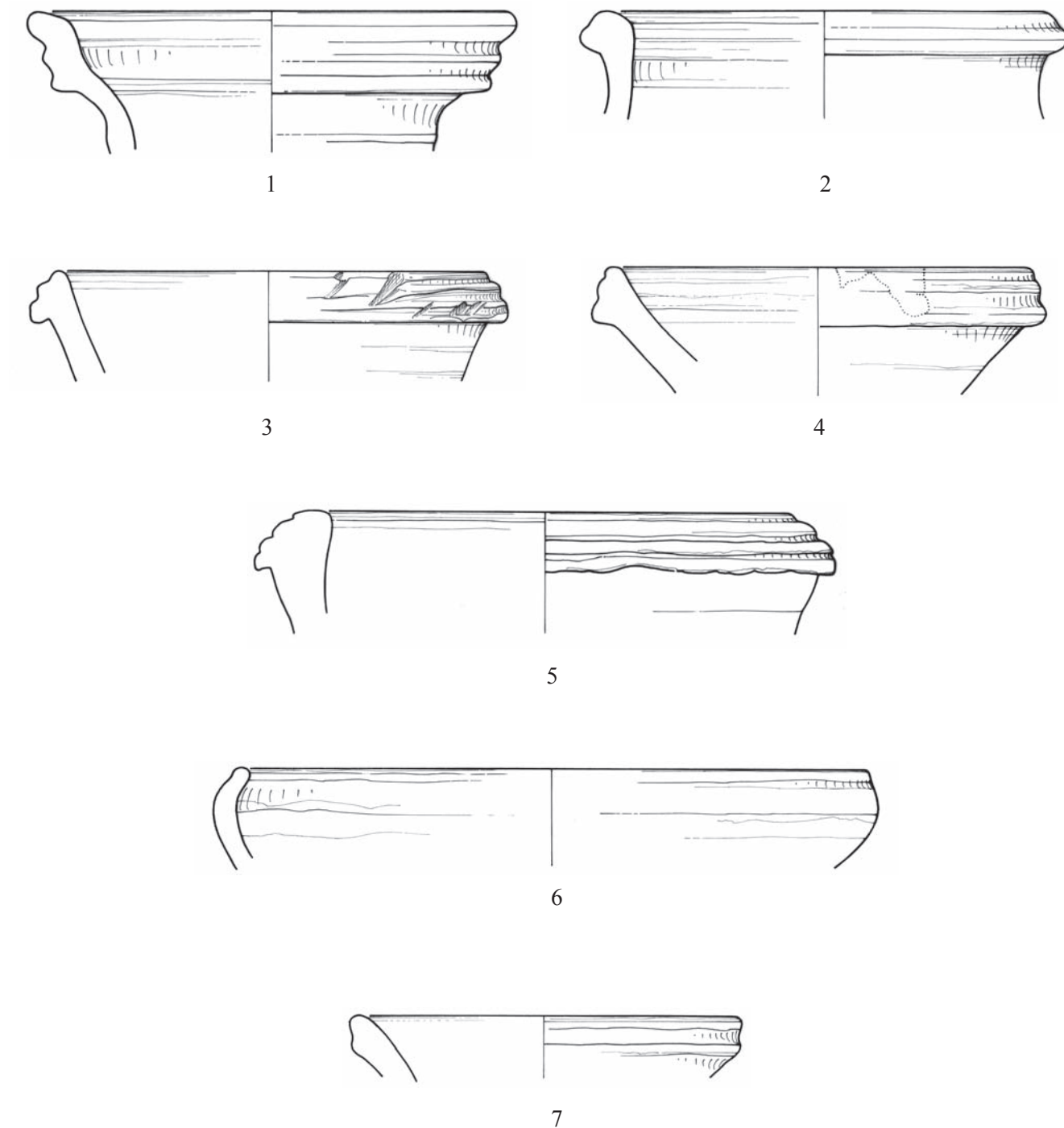


Fig. 22. (cont.)



*Fig. 23. Pre-Islamic coarse wares from the Bala Hissar (scale: 50%).*

TABLE 15. Descriptions of pottery illustrated in Fig. 23.

| No. | Details   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | Jar with narrow neck and collared rim. Possible early Kushan date (Philippe Marquis, pers. com.); similar form from Hadda, dated first to fourth centuries (Tarzi 2005: 293, fig. 20, a–c). Pre-Islamic parallels for rim form also come from Tepe Maranjan (Carl and Hackin 1959: fig. 19); and Sasanian Merv (Puschnigg 2006: 182, forms R132, R133; 184, R165). Fabric: 4. Surfaces: red slip inside and out. Diameter: 19 cm. Provenance: general collection. Drawing: BH07/16. |
| 2   | Jar with exterior bevelled rim. Fabric: 5. Surfaces: thick red slip inside and out, polished on exterior. Similar rim forms dated post-Kushan to the Arab conquest; and fifth to mid-eighth centuries (Lyonnet 1997: 416, figs. 76.7, 79.3); another “late Kushan” from Shamshir Ghar (Dupree L. 1958: 213, fig. 35). Diameter: 19 cm (10%). Provenance: general collection. Drawing: BH07/14.  |
| 3   | Vessel with collared rim, form uncertain. Fabric: 4. Surfaces: uncoated; fired paler than break. Parallel for rim-form dated from the Kushan/post-Kushan period (Gardin and Lyonnet 1978–79: 121, fig. 15, top left); or Sasanian period (Puschnigg 2006: 180, form R101, fig. A3.14). Diameter: 14 cm (10%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/42.   |
| 4   | Vessel with collared rim, form uncertain, similar to no. 3 above. Fabric: 4. Surfaces: uncoated except for spot of brown-red slip on rim. Diameter: 14 cm (12%). Provenance: trench 2. Drawing: BH07/43.  |
| 5   | Jar with collared rim, similar to no. 3 above. Fabric: 3. Surfaces: red slip over rim only; slightly sooted. Diameter: 19 cm (17%). Provenance: NSH. Drawing: BH07/93.  |
| 6   | Bowl with slightly in-turned rim. Fabric: 4. Surfaces: thin, smooth good-quality red slip inside and out. Paralleled by examples dated to the Bronze Age (Francfort 1989: fig. 30, top left; Lyonnet 1997: 64, fig. 18, no. 5). Diameter: 21 cm (5%). Provenance: trench 1. Drawing: BH07/58.   |
| 7   | Bowl with slightly externally thickened rim. Fabric: 3. Surfaces: uncoated. Paralleled by example dated to the Bronze Age (Francfort 1989: fig. 34, type II, 4). Diameter: 13 cm (7%). Provenance: trench 1. Drawing: BH07/60.  |

*Splashed red slip ware* (Table 12, Fig. 20)

This wheel-made ware is distinguished by the careless application of a wide band of thin red slip or wash around the rim and over the upper walls, or highlighting features such as handles. Spots, splashes and dribbles often run over the lower body. The date of the ware is indicated by the appearance of such pots in photographs of shops in Kabul and Ghazni in the 1970s, and also in Istalif, a distribution that suggests multiple production centres.<sup>77</sup> The date of their appearance is unknown, and their abundance could indicate a considerable lifespan, but all have here been assigned to the modern phase.

*Early modern coarse wares* (Table 13, Fig. 21)

This category of material is the least securely identified and dated of the material presented in this catalogue, since it has neither the advantage of recent records nor of many excavated archaeological parallels, with which to compare. The identifications presented here are based on the first author’s general experience of

Afghan and Middle Eastern ceramics, and will without doubt be subject to some revision, as the period becomes better known.

*Mediaeval coarse wares* (Table 14, Fig. 22)

Pottery from the periods of Ghurid and Ghaznavid primacy in Afghanistan is well known in comparison to that from the post-Mongol era, and a number of published corpora have been useful in identifying the coarse wares presented here.

*Pre-Islamic coarse wares* (Table 15, Fig. 23)

The material presented here covers possible Bronze Age pieces to Sasanian times. Some of the modelled rim forms of this group are distinctive with similar examples found in published assemblages.

*Acknowledgements*

The authors made two short visits to the Bala Hissar, in the company of representatives of the National Afghan Institute of Archaeology, the Department of Historic Monuments and Jolyon Leslie of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture. The field team consisted of

<sup>77</sup> For Kabul, see Velter, Delloye and Lamothe 1979: 217; for Istalif, see [www.jindhag.org/istalif-intro.html](http://www.jindhag.org/istalif-intro.html); for Ghazni, see <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/cities/afghanistan/afghanistan.html> (both accessed 18 Jan. 2013).

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